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Diasporic Pain in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories*

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Abstract

The collection of short stories *The Middleman and Other Stories (1989)* written by Bharati Mukherjee, is a collection full of traumatic experiences in the life of diasporas. The characters in almost all the stories undergo many ups and downs in course of getting adjusted in the new alien land. Some of the characters are from European world while most of them belong to Asian origin, that migrate there for their concrete mission, but they can not live up to their expectation and hence start facing many pains and sorrows. They put maximum effort to become completely audacious to come up above the limit of the natives.. In course of their stay they start getting some good jobs and respect and finally mediate themselves thinking that they are great to come across those challenges. Therefore, the diasporic pain as a traumatic experience is seen in the migrant characters but finally they are bound to become happy and mediate themselves.

The author has been greatly successful in projecting diasporic voice that man is destined to fall if he or she allows ambitions to hover in the air, far beyond one's destined lot and limitations. The psychological turmoil they experience and the sense of loss they arrive at, are true to many of the post- colonial mimic men. This anthology has been very categorical in establishing this reality. However the migrants characters experience pain and get extreme frustration, they are bound to reconcile and get adjusted with the new environment and the new land.

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I. Bharati Mukherjee, Diasporic Pain and Criticisms

This anthology the *Middleman and Other Stories*, written by Bharati Mukherjee, is a work of diasporic experience. Mukherjee, in this anthology, through the characters like Maya, Alfred and Jasmine, endeavors to depict how the characters from already colonized non-western terrain in the process of migrating to another unknown western locale like America and Canada, are facing the difficulty in having a concrete identity. She, sharing her own experience of diasporic living, wants to reveal the suffering of migrant characters as well as the traumatic experience associated with identity crisis. Most of the migrant characters are undergoing the pain of identity crisis caused by the hybrid situation which however helps them mediate between the native culture and the ways of the new land.

Scholars of diasporic identity are inspired to deal with the double situation in their literary works. They have the difficulty of balancing their double vision. Migrant characters are vividly presented through their works to dissect how the situation of double location is making them fluid in their life activities. While staying in hybridity, diasporic writers as well as characters have borderline experience of leading the double life. They are compulsively living between the past and present history. It is clear that migrant characters have the pain of locating themselves when two cultures collide with each other. Writers have the painful awareness of diasporic dwelling and the same awareness is reflected in their works through the migrant characters. The migrant characters speak trauma of postcolonial identity experienced by diasporic writers in the process of adjusting themselves on the foreign home. They want to depict the migrants' hardship as well as inspiration of endeavoring to adjust the middle way between the homeland and new land. There can be found many mover

scholars of diasporic experience like Ondaatje, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, V.S Naipaul and so many others. All of these scholars are determined to create the major issue biculturalism through their works. Among these scholars, Bharati Mukherjee, as one of the most distinguished scholars in diasporic world, has dedicated her life in sharing her trauma of postcolonial identity through her significant literary works. All of her works less or more reflect her own experience of diasporic dwelling. Like other diasporic scholars she also deals with the major theme, postcolonial issue 'biculturalism' and its complexities of cross-cultural life. Among those works, *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), presents dilemma, the diasporic situation of migrants and their difficulty of undergoing the way of new milieu.

In this anthology, those migrants encounter other alien culture. They can not escape from the dual reality at the moment of assimilating new way of new life. They have double consciousness that neither leads them to the traditional past nor to the present, rather they are in the process of assimilating both past and present. It's the diasporic reality depicted in the works of migrant writers. It can be known that this fluctuating circumstance between the two cultural poles is the migrant compulsion. Diasporic world is entangled in the claim of the past and need of the present. Postcolonial writers as well as migrant characters want to share the anxiety are in such new milieu of hybridity. The migrants are supposed to reform themselves in both painful as well as productive way. They undergo the great challenge of balancing their cleft psyche that inspires to share postcolonial identity related to traumatic experience through the works of diasporic feelings.

Mukherjee, a diasporic writer, who was born in July 27, 1940 in Calcutta, India, was brought up in a large and upper middle class Hindu Brahmin family. Until

the age of eight, she lived with nearly 50 relatives. So the extended family came to be one of the sources of favorable environment for her study because of constant inspirations. Born into an extraordinary close-knit and intelligent family, Mukherjee was given ample academic opportunities and thus has all perused academic endeavors in her career and had the opportunity to receive excellent schooling. During her childhood, Mukherjee had a sort of realization of her capacity to be a writer. Now she is a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. Her journey of life through various ups and downs has given her many sweet and bitter experiences, which are exploited in her literary works.

Having planned to be a writer since childhood, Mukherjee went to the University of Iowa to attend a Prestigious Writer's Workshop Seminar in the same year. This seminar added another brick in her literary career. The impression of first visit in Iowa was so deep rooted in her mind that she decided to study there to earn her Master's of Fine Arts. After that she returned to India to marry a bridegroom of her father's choice in her class and caste but that was not possible.

In 1963, Mukherjee impulsively married Clark Blaise, a Canadian writer against the will of her parents. In the same year, she received her Master's Degree in Fine Arts. After the five years of her marriage, she migrated to Canada with her husband. In 1969 she moved to University of Iowa for her Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature. When she came to be a naturalized citizen of Canada in 1972, she had to spend her hardest life over there, because of discrimination to the immigrants. The immigrants' life in Canada is reflected in many of her stories including the stories collected in present book. Canadian official rhetoric designated her as one of the "visible minority" (31). Those toughest years in Canada became the

source for the exploitation of her creativity. That sense of alienation in Canada is presented in her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), which embodies the loneliness she felt there but could not acknowledge, even to herself as she negotiated the no man's land between the country of her past and the continent of her present. With the same theme, her second novel *Wife* (1975) was also published.

Similarly *Days and Night in Calcutta* (1977), a collaborative prose work with her husband Clerk Blaise, deals with the issue of the first trip to India taken by the couple after being married. It tells a tale of a relationship that faces the daily difficulties of the cultural barriers because of the cultural differences. Other writings in Canada, including articles on civil rights such as 'An Invisible Woman' and a few short stories, were also published in a collection named *Darkness* (1985). This first collection of short stories focuses on the natives of south Asia, who carve for success and stability but are burdened.

Finally fed up with institutionalized discrimination in Canadian land, Mukherjee and her family moved to the United States in 1980, where she was sworn in as a permanent U.S. resident. 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. Another collaborative effort with her husband was published in the U.S.A. *The Sorrow and the Terror: The Hunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy* (1987); on the 1985 crash of the Air India plane Kanishak, traveling from Toronto to Bombay. Mukherjee's another collection of short stories *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) has won the National Books Critic Award and higher critical

recognition. In this collection of stories, she has become a valuable middleman, where she links desperate worlds in a garland.

Mukherjee's non-fictional prose works are also no less important in the field of literature. Her first non-fictional writing is *Kautilya's Concept Diplomacy: A New Interpretation* (1970). Another non-fiction is *Political Culture and Leadership in India* (1991). Political and cultural aspects of India are reflected in her another non-fictional work *Regionalism in Indian Perspective* (1992). Jasmine, her extraordinary novel entered in the literary landscape in 1989, the same years as Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, Michelle Cliffs *No Telephone to Heaven* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Line* published. Each of these writers is considered to be a contributor to the genre of post-colonial literature and echo the voices from the marginalized perspective. The importance of Jasmine lies in its translation into eighteen different languages of the world. Her recent novel *Desirable Daughters* (2004) is achingly compassionate and ravishingly beautiful.

Mukherjee is a wonderfully subtle writer, who achieves her powerful and poignant effects by stealth rather than by direct action. Writing for her is a process of discovering 'truth', a necessity to think, to feel, to realize the condition of an immigrant to be assimilated in the new culture. She is the most promising creative writer of modern life in all its complicated aspects. She with her four novels, so far collection of short stories and other non-fictional works, has added a new and significant dimension to the Indian-American literature. What distinguishes Bharati Mukherjee from other writers is the expression of her personal experiences with the socio-politico-cultural background of both source and target cultures.

The purpose of her writing is to discover for herself and then to describe and to convey the real experiences of an immigrant. For an immigrant the source and target both cultures are sources of writing. That's why her fiction takes its form and tone from polarities, opposite, and irreconcilables. The 'source' and target both cultures are presented in her works to show the oddity, distortion of personality, dislocation of normal life, recklessness of behavior, morbidity of temperament, malignancy of motive, radical form of alienation, maladjustments and contradictions. Mukherjee presents both cultures in order to show her own condition. She makes her narrator of her works as her own mouth piece. As Mukherjee writes about the both east and west and her writings tend to be replete with elements of biculturalism. She herself uses the term 'bicultural aspect' to describe her novels. Bharati Mukherjee's characters in most of the stories retain a duality of consciousness that allows her to merge wisdom and experience from east and west as a means from felicitating her cultural adaptation wherever she resides.

In the collection *The Middleman and Other Stories*, most of the stories deal with Asian immigrants. The theme of all the eleven stories is immigration and the reciprocal effect upon the immigrant. Mukherjee depicts such traumatic experiences of the migrant characters that have to undergo suffering while attempting to adopt themselves to the alien culture. Though her characters feel the bitter experiences of marginalization, discrimination and humiliation, they are eager to be adapted in the new culture. Another most successful device of Mukherjee is the journey of the character from one country to another as her own. That journey creates multiple nationalities. Her characters are free from particular values and beliefs to be survived

in an alien land. That's why her characters are not static and straight. As a diasporic writer, she presents the ups and downs of the migrants in her works.

Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* has captured the critical eye of many scholars since its publication in 1988. The criticisms given on the text are different due to the different theoretical perspectives of these scholars who want to understand it in their own favor. Likewise, Adan Hochschild notes 'how much more ambitious Mukherjee is in the range of her subjects' (50). He wants to show her as an ambitious writer in her subject matter. Another well-known scholar Polly Shulman stressing on the global as well as multicultural situation, points out that Mukherjee's message may be that "every one is living in a new world even those who never left home"(19). He understands this text as message of new situation even for the native people.

Celia MaGree on the process of analyzing stories, writes that the depth of the stories in *Middleman* "comes from the sudden inference of history and tragedy, and the exigencies of politics and war" (22). She has concluded that the historical sense behind the career of characters is making them aware of the past trauma which makes them move forward in present. Highlighting the Mukherjee's strategy of short stories, Carol Ascher shows how in dealing with the immigrant experience "the strategy of short stories has served (Mukherjee) well" (19). He means that Mukherjee has been able to shape the immigrant experience through the short stories.

Sant-Wade, Arvindra and Karen Radell combinedly emphasizing on rebirth of female protagonist in Mukherjee's short stories, opine that "it is apparently a deeper wound for the women of the third world, who are engaged in the struggle to fashion a

new identity for themselves in an alien culture” (11). They again say that “a close look at three stories from *The Middleman and Other Stories*, each with a female protagonist from the Third World, illustrates the authors technique and her success in conveying this theme of rebirth or refashioning of the self by immigrant women” (16). Jennifer Drake, presenting his opinion about her position in her stories, argues that “assimilation is portrayed as cultural looting, cultural exchange or a willful and sometimes costly negotiation in her stories, Mukherjee rejects the nostalgia of hyphenated “Americans” and their acceptable stories and portrays instead settlers, Americans who want to be American not sojourners, tourists, guest workers, or foreigners” (60).

Despite all these critical responses from many scholars, it seems that the issue raised by the present researcher, has not been explored yet. So, it will be a new way of reading the text for better understanding.

In the process of applying methodology for the raised issue Diasporic pain, we can't complete theoretical analysis without discussing about the postcolonial theoretical perspective like hybridity, diasporas and ambivalence. To make the interpretation clear and distinct, Bhabha is the back-drop for everything we discuss with the characters' diasporic pain. Bhabha while theorizing postcolonial issues like diasporic pain and hybridity, interprets postcolonial trauma, the loss of identity via the sense of his notion on hybridity. He says that especially in the context of diasporic identity the migrant characters are not on the home of wholeness, due to the intervention of colonial way of life and its ideologies. Rather they are on the conflictual 'in-between' space between longing for the pre-colonial homeland and the surveillance of present new land. Furthermore he clarifies that new 'in-between' space

is neither the past homeland nor the present new land, it is the third creative space, and Bhabha intends to say it is painful as well as productive.

As the above discussed theoretical perspective is used in the research text "*The Middleman and Other Stories*", it is clear for us that the migrant characters who are assimilating diasporic identity, flutter between the two words: claim of the past and need of the present. Most of the characters in this anthology, who are known as the people from the already colonized non-western terrain like India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Trinidad and Indonesia, begin to live the miserable life of the new land. They have the determined desire of making prosperous life there and in the other hand challenge of compromising with the new land looms before them. Their past, the traditional way of life that they used to live without the feeling of alienation is with them both as contemporary and memory in the present coexistence of alien land. It makes them incomplete and they feel lack in their life. When they enter into the domain of western locale like America and Canada, they feel oppressed, exploited, discriminated marginalized and humiliated by the new milieu like a child before his father's ideologies. They can not be happy due to their conflictual desire in having a concrete belonging either to homeland or to the new land. Though it is nothing more than the suffering for them in having a concrete identity, they are in the compulsion to be adjusted in the new land. Thus, diasporic pain is seen in the characters.

II. Diasporic pain as a part of postcolonial experience

In the process of applying appropriate theoretical methodology for the raised issue 'Diasporic pain', we can't remain without discussing about the postcolonial studies. To discuss about the post colonialism we need to bring forth the theorists like Homi K Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, R. Radhakrishnan, Edward Said and the like. Since topic of the thesis is related to postcolonial experience I would like to include the tools like Hybridity, Diaspora, Post colonialism and Ambivalence as they are in postcolonial course of studies.

The main theory which touches the diasporic pain is discussed by Homi K. Bhabha, the most powerful proponent of post colonial theory, theorizing mostly Derridian deconstruction and Lacannian poststructuralist psychoanalysis, who dissects post colonial trauma as the loss of identity through his theoretical perspective notion of hybridity discussed in his book *Location of Culture*. His theoretical notion of hybridity draws a map of whole post colonial scenario from the very time up to the present cultural dislocation and its ongoing cultural interaction between west and east. Bhabha wants to keep this postcolonial era far away from the fixity of colonial discourse and discriminatory dichotomy of Eurocentricism. Post colonialism as a deconstructive tool of dismantling the holistic perspective, is innovative awareness among the theorists to uncover the discourse formation of western ideology, superficiality of hierarchical relationship and marginalized as well oppressed voice of colonized as well as diasporic people.

Most of the post colonial scholars speak about the colonial strategy that helps the colonizers to be successful in colonial mission. This mission of colonizing other has something to do with the diasporic pain, without the painful experience of the new

land it is almost an impossible task. Among them, Edward Said is another scholar, who through the publication of the text *Orientalism*, seems curious to depict the discourse formation of orientalism. He takes support from Foucault and Gramsci and talks about the power of western discourse to hegemonize the oriental people. Through this book 'orientalism' he throws light in deconstructing the strategy of colonial mission, its ideological construction and desire of getting supremacy over the oriental people and its terrain. It's believed that post colonialism begins to spread its tentacle through Said's orientalism. He dissects how west in the period of colonialism, is successful to retrieve the supremacy by setting up stereotypes, images and myth of orientalism. He consents that colonial mission fulfills its hungry stomach by exploiting oriental people and its locale both in physical as well as psychological level. All the theoretical tools that are related to the life of a migrant are directly or indirectly related to postcolonial studies. Thus it is relevant to discuss about Post-colonialism in the beginning to include the significance of diasporic pain in Postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism has already been established as a distinct field of study in the Western as well as the Eastern academia. It's not possible to make a detailed discussion of it within the scope of the present-work. It however, will be discussed in brief over here as post-colonialism is the very discourse which helps us understand how the diasporic people are undergoing the traumatic experiences in having a concrete identity.

As we know, post-colonialism deals with colonial onslaught and its impacts on both groups: colonizers and colonized natives. Obviously, European colonization relied on the two inseparable phenomena: knowledge and power. The colonizers

political and economic hegemonies were accompanied by their project of winning others. Through the implementation of the colonial educational system, they made the natives perceive things from their (colonizers') perspective. It not only made them masters in the eyes of the natives but also disrupted the indigenous culture. Actually, the ideologies, which the colonizers created out of their fear of the things and people beyond their understanding, turned into knowledge. The texts, therefore, have played a great role both in establishing as well as reinforcing the themes and stereotypes of colonialism before as well as after the period of decolonization. Many critics and writers claim that the ex-colonized spaces are still culturally colonized despite they are politically independent. Hence they are made attracted towards Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* appeared in 1978. The publication of *Orientalism* is still regarded as the point of departure of colonialism. Then appeared another seminal work: Homi K. Bhabha's *Location of Culture*(1993) followed by other writings exploring postcolonial issues.

The term "postcolonial", however, was not in use until Gayatri Spivak used it in her work *The Post-colonial Critic* published in 1991. The term "Postcolonialism" is still rife with controversies. Some postcolonial critics and theorists think that Postcolonialism means a theoretical discussion on the condition after decolonization whereas others claim that it deals with the colonialism and its impacts right from the very beginning of the colonial onslaught. According to Ashcroft, Bill et al:

it does not mean post-independence or after colonialism, for this would be to falsely ascribe an end to the colonial process. Post-colonialism begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It

is a discourse of oppositionality which coloniality brings into being....

(117)

It, however, would be wise to talk of a few tendencies and characteristics observed in various postcolonial texts. Undoubtedly, it derives theoretical strategies and characteristics from post structuralism especially from Derridian deconstruction and Foucauldian discourse theory. Like poststructuralism, postcolonialism debunks the coercive binarisms like west/east, man,/woman, primary /secondary and so on. It debunks such binaries so that it can make a room for indigenous cultural values and worldviews ignored by the so-called imperialist truths. It challenges and debunks the western canonical texts. Moreover, it deals with the third world people's traumatic experiences like cultural disruption, hybridity, diaspora, migration and so-forth. In the beginning, it was focused upon challenging colonial ideologies imposed on the natives. It was preoccupied with the issues concerning identity and indigenous people. Cultural nationalism, therefore, came into limelight.

The postcolonial writers concentrated their efforts in trying to establish the identity of the natives by highlighting their culture. They sought to construct the indigenous nationalism based on native myth and culture. The theorists like Said challenged the Western culture attempted to construct the third world cultural nationalism. Likewise, the writer Chinua Achebe tried to construct cultural nationalism by exploiting the Nigerian rituals. In the same manner, Subaltern Study Group, in their first three volumes, conducted researches on the culture of the subaltern people. They were attempting to construct new nationalism made of indigenous culture of the peasants. They brought subalternity into Postcolonialism. In the course of bringing this, there was lots of ups and downs in the people of

targeted culture, hence the migrants suffer the similar fate.

Later on, the postcolonial writers, with the rise of postmodernism and post structuralism, realized that the terms like cultural nationalism and indigenous culture are essentialist and coercive. They shifted their focus to the issues of cultural displacement. As we know, the colonial onslaught disrupted the indigenous culture. It turned the natives into black skin having white masks as Franz Fanon suggest in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*. It brought about hybridity with respect to identity, culture and consciousness of the natives. They were turned into dangling people torn between the native culture and the imperial culture. This cultural displacement touched its peak only in diasporic situation. Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *Location of Culture* argues that colonialism not only disrupted the native culture but also the colonial culture. Referring to the in between condition of the colonized subjects, Bhabha has developed the concept of mimicry. According to him, the colonized people challenge and make the imperialist truths impure through mimicry when they use the imperial language to express their indigenous experiences.

Slowly and gradually cultural nationalism gave in to globalization, transnationalism, and multiculturalism. These phenomena, at present, are valorized instead of the essentialist concepts like indigenous culture and cultural nationalism. The writers like Rushdie and Marquez are marching on this path. They construct ambivalent space to make a room for the indigenous culture by debunking the imperialist culture. In the same manner, they heavily exploit diasporic as well as multicultural experiences; they achieve all these through the application of magical realism in their works. Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, and Okri's *The Famished Road* are a few examples of magical

realist texts, which have been successful in achieving, what postcolonial writing are supposed to achieve. Now the postcolonial writers have realized that it is not possible to restore the pure indigenous culture. Instead of making a hopeless effort to restore erroneous culture, they are trying to establish a less hostile relationship between the native culture and the learned culture. The state of ambivalence in the people who have left their motherland for some reasons shows that they are suffering from the problems of displacement and rootless condition. This condition can't remain without the pain suffered by the diasporic people. When people suffered the conditions full of trauma, they were under compulsion to bring out a new culture adopting some trends of the native culture and the new culture they had to adapt with. Thus, they had to undergo many traumatic experiences that are the pains of people living in foreign land after abandoning their mother culture.

Hybridity explicitly refers to the situation of cross cultural exchange in which we tend to find third form of cultural space out. Without the inclusion of hybridity my project of finding diasporic pain remains worthless. Hybridity can be taken as two ways learning process in which one cultural group participates, interacts, encounters with another distinct cultural group. In this sense, one cultural individual encounters with next cultural group, individual that help to understand, contribute the mutual transformation, purposeful thinking among the opposite cultural groups. Gandhi recites : "It may be useful to look at the whole phenomena as transaction [. . .] as a interactive, dialogic, two-way process rather than a sing active-passive one: as a process involving complex negotiation and exchange" (125). As we refer to the process involving complex negotiation and exchange, there appear practically, theoretically two and more than two factors, belongings, doings, beliefs that they take

place as a/an debate interaction, dispute which informs us to learn side by side.

According to the key concepts of post-colonial studies, hybridity has been defined as the creation of newness, output not only in the cultural aspects but also in species, politics, linguistics, races. They are the different forms of hybridization; [. . .] hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization"(118). So there is the new transcultural form as the result of contact zone produced by colonization gives rise to the situation of hybridity. Nevertheless, beyond this, we could see this process technically, naturally. Further, as used in horticulture, the term refers to "the crossbreeding two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, hybrid species" (118). Clearly, it forms third 'hybrid' species or animal which could result the actual process to happen actual creation of hybridized plant and animal rather than what we call in distinct cultural groups and individuals because the cultural groups often possess the ambivalence attitude to each other and within the self. Thus, the cross-cultural 'exchange' with different institutions and its privileging values and practices encounter with opposite forces such as colonizer and colonized, majorities and minorities, evil and good, love and hate, civilized and barbaric occur along the verities of ambivalent registers.

Hybridity, however, more obviously, stands as the construction of the space that is beyond the two or more than two existing cultural systems Bhabha called "third space of enunciation" (37). When we are within the contact zone, the culture simply becomes our identity. We, therefore, culturally identify and locate ourselves. Because of this cultural difference rather than the cultural diversity, we favor to identify that is process of an empowering hybridity. In addition, the cultural identity emerges in the ambivalent attitude in regard to time and space. Then, at this

movement, the cultural difference for Bhabha claims:

It is significant that the production capacities of this third space have a colonial or post-colonial provenance. For willingness to descend into alien territory [. . .] may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based on not an exoticism of multiculturalism or diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture hybridity. (38)

It is in-between space that attempts to carry the meaning of the culture and the burden of the culture as well. The burden of culture here is referred to the painful experiences of the people in adapting with the new culture in an alien land. Cultural hybridity is caused by many traumas of a character in a new land where they have migrated for betterment. Therefore, it is third space enunciation or search for the new cultural space that make the notion of hybridity so important. Our great labor is to produce and construct new direction significantly stands between the space of colonial and post-colonial prominence but we must keep ourselves away from celebrating the past and homogenizing the present. Therefore, Bhabha further point strongly out: "is far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial culture to recommend that 'roots' be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the present" (9). Moreover, most importantly, Bhabha throws light on third space of enunciation that focuses on the exchange of the in-between space where he privileges the colonized to be aware of identifying the 'self rather than fantasizing and dreaming within the colonial consciousness over the colonial psyche and sense of superiority.

In the context of racial sense, 'Hybrid' originally its credit goes to Robert Young who

says, "hybridity a term of denigration; literally so: the blackening or sullyng' of a thing [. ..] hybridity as concept [. ..] accounts of racial origins and racial distraction" (250). In contrarily, it is the Eurocentric colonial way to see the origins and racial distinction. It is also presented as the proponents of racial separation with disturbing scenario of racial interbreeding and intermarriage. In this sense, he strongly reacts that the hybridity regarded as the Cultural process is direct hindrance and pinholes to the racial theory. So he further point out, "in the possibility of the 'hybrid' the categories through which racial theory conceived the world were upheld and, tantalizingly, collapsed" (250).

Young explicitly tends to draw attention of the readers to the prehistory, of the term hybridity. He questions how 'hybridity' has slipped from being a metaphor about racial intermingling or purity to one of the cultural mixture or separateness. However, more positively, he writes, "hybridity shows the connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse" (27).

Andrew Smith summarizes that hybridity has become progressive term that is recaptured to disrupt the patterns of categorization and control in regard to that of familiar historical pattern in which a derogatory level, connoting regression and disintegration. He mentions, "[...] can distinguish the different ways in which the term hybridity is used contemporarily, especially in relation to question of culture. The first is every day sense of the word, the second is the way in which "hybridity" has tended to be deployed in contemporary critical theory" (251). In normal day today life, we are shifting into multicultural societies. Open mindedness, communal, mutual organization of social system can be seen in the countries like England, Australia, America, Japan, and Canada where the hybridity implies the mingling of

once separate, desperate, discrete ways of living. In the theoretical level, Smith frankly writes, "[...] hybridity as synonym of diversity or multiculturalism continues to rely on the assumption that there were primeval. Separate and distinct cultural orders [. . .] beginning to meet in the context of global migration" (257). Hybridity, thus, for Andrew Smith is the prominent result of the global migration of the people. This migration of the people simply means the diasporic life. Without the migration of people to a foreign land it does not become diasporic life. Therefore there is complete pain in the diasporic life.

In the collection of stories taken for analysis exactly matches with the Bhabha's notion of hybridity and hence it obviously, while talking the issues of culture and the cultural hybridity, argues that culture is never essential or innate, but is always something, that is closely performed and learnt in fiction and drama, classrooms and lecture halls. As Bhabha speaks it is true that all the cultures are developed through experiences, whenever a character has new experience he merges it with the former one and hence it becomes a new culture. Smith adds that culture is a thing learnt, created and stayed, however, then it is also profoundly susceptible to the possibility of opted, copied or appropriated that is taken as newly emerge fashion which claims that it is specific property of unique expression of a single community. Then, culture has globally become the prominent thing to identify the self. This also carries the theme of struggle among the people of distinct cultural groups. The reason is that they migrate and immigrate whether they may be the colonized individuals or colonizing way of life different individuals or it is the colonized upper-class identity their expatriate life in the colonies. They, therefore, adopt, adapt and remake different practices and values being colonizer accordance to their own use of name and tag. In

this sense, hybridity stands as a term not only mixing of once separate and self-contained cultural traditions, tendencies but rather for the reorganization of the fact that all culture is the area of struggle. There is the claim of the minorities, others who show their consciousness that threaten to that of hegemonic account of the dominant cultural pattern and practices or tendencies.

Hybridization is commonly taken as the phenomenon produced within contact zone that can be logically arbitrarily well accepted on the cultural process. The epistemological ideas are very much linked with the cultural diversity but cultural difference encompasses the process of enunciation of culture as knowledgeable, adoptable, which constructs the system of identification. So Bhabha further points out.

The revision of the history critical theory rests . . . on the notion of cultural difference, not cultural diversity, cultural diversity is an epistemological object cultural is an object of empirical knowledge whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as 'knowledgeable', authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. (206)

He therefore, is in the favor that there is no possibility of establishing our mother culture in a new land. A character when he goes to a new land automatically tries to remember his mother culture but it does not become effective in establishing itself there but rather has to suffer many difficulties in acclimatizing himself. But finally, as the character does not have any option to do he realizes his dangling condition and hence mediates to follow mostly the new culture. This is a situation in a migrant character in all the diasporic land.

Hybridity often takes place in the specific circumstances. This specific circumstance is the circumstance of diasporic experience. While there are the contacts among the groups, individuals and community one culture has the sense of superiority, wants to exercise the cultural values and practices towards or minority culture. In contrast, different conditions, actions also take place such as resistance, separation, integration and adaptation. It is naturally, theoretically, practically, culturally, politically these all conditions go side by side. Then, basic thing to understand equally is the context not what but how they came into the existence, how they tend to continue the existence

Anyway, it has become the wonderful as well as painful tendencies of the migrant characters in course of their stay in alien land. They moreover, have contacts with each other during their stay in a migrated land. Then, we need to understand the 'other' that possibly encourages other to understand the self'. This identification of self suggests us that a person who has migrated to foreign land from his native country is treated as an "other" therefore he suffers pain and thus is a pain of diasporic life. That is the exchange of each cultural values and practices or tendencies. In fact, it possibly results through the negotiation. Thus, the negotiation is the purposeful, result-oriented, message-oriented media that anchor the two opposite tendencies such as separatist and integrationist tendencies.

Psychoanalytically, ambivalence tends to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. Young adds, "it also refers to a simultaneous attraction towards and repulsion from an object, person or action" (67). The term ambivalence indicates a state of mind in which there is tile simultaneous existence of contradictory tendencies, attitudes, feelings concerning single object

especially the existence of two opposite ideas, concepts, beliefs, creeds, subjects and behaviors such as love, hate, sacred sin, good bad, colonized colonizer and civilized uncivilized. A psychoanalyst; therefore, rewards ambivalence as a psychic condition in which positive and negative components of the emotional, physical attitudes and actions are simultaneously in evidence and they are inseparable.

A character having ambivalent stage in his cultural uprootedness has a situation of dilemma 'to do or not to do' at the initial stage which has to suffer extreme pain to adjust himself with the new culture he has to undergo, with respect to the situation, an individual or person is in great trap in between the two world: a mother land and a foreign land. In addition, the forthcoming result of the third space will be no one knows but dreams of uncertainty and anxieties follow him/her. Thus, critic such as Homi K. Bhaba intellectually wants to purpose: "This luminosity of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one's there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoin in the survival of migrant life" (224). This clearly indicates that the migrant characters get the situation between two worlds and cultures. It is necessary for them to survive there. When they have this kind of double situation, It follows them that they have the anxiety of dualism. Though they are ambivalently struggling they always suffer from the compulsive dilemma and endeavor to get rid of it. Bhabha hopes that it leads to the hybridization as cultural process. Moreover, hybridization as cultural process has become widely discussed phenomenon, has also become the cultural adaptation to each other that clearly exposes the ambivalent tendencies, attitudes and behaviors. In the process of adapting himself a character has to mediate and reconcile which is nothing other than the *Diasporic Mediation*.

However, more importantly ambivalence is also regarded as unwelcome aspect of the colonial discourse for the colonizer because it violates the clear-cut authority of colonial domination and leads to the situation of dilemma. Contrarily, it is the attitude of colonized subjects who strongly tend to resist or separate that colonizer's authority hegemonic attitude on the one hand. They want to involve into the complicity interrelation. They also reproduce assumptions, habits, values, patterns or tendencies of the colonizer that is the mimicry of the colonizer on the other hand. So, Bhabha extends the ideas- "Instead it produces ambivalent subject whose mimicry is never very far from mockery, ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery that is fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance" (13).

In regard to extend what Bhabha in his colonial discourse theory says that colonial relation is always ambivalent. It generates the seeds of its own destruction that means the downfall from the hegemonic position. For example, when colonizer regards colonized subject as uncivilized or uneducated, they want to make trained to be more civilized or educated. To do so, they exercise their assumption, beliefs, values and practices towards the colonized subjects that stand as the controversial debate or issues. Then, it implies that colonial relationship is going to be disrupted, regardless of any resistance rebellion on the parts of colonized. Ambivalence rise to a controversial or dual proposition in Bhabha's theory. Having an ambivalent stage a character tends to encompass all the issues raised by almost the postcolonial theorists, so an issue like diasporic life and its pain must be discussed as tool to accomplish my task.

Diaspora as one of the deconstructive tools of post colonial perspective

brings an awareness to depict the superficial domination and supremacy of west over the colonized terrain and its precolonial people known as the migrant back to the metropolitan cities of the west. It is gained in the process of undergoing diasporic pain as a difficulty in having a concrete identity among the intellectuals who theoretically speak about the traumatic experience of diasporic identity. When we are curious about diaspora, we can know that it as a post colonial term is derived from the Greek meaning 'to disperse'. Diasporic movement is a central historical fact in current postcolonial world. Postcolonialism is greatly indebted to diaspora because it shares its terrain of study in the matter of postcolonial trauma. Postcolonial experience is the experience of those people who undergo the difficulty of traumatic changes in beliefs, traditions and cultures. The difficulty of traumatic change is realized by the people, who are migrating another locale. Likewise here also, the current context is about the migrant and their far away home land. They living the diasporic life gain the consciousness of pain and agony in difficulty as they have the two double realities. They are not at ease when they are in the process of adjusting the new locale. To contextualize diasporic identity and its pain, it is better for us to understand the book *Diasporic Mediation* where R. Radhakrishnan mentions:

To consider, then, "the diaspora as the history of the present" within the longue duree of colonialism nationalism: if nationalism in a deep structural sense is the flip side of colonialism and if the diaspora is "nationalism's significant other", how is the diaspora related to colonialism ? This question takes on even greater complexity when we consider the fact that the diasporas we are taking about are "metropolitan diasporas" that is, diaspora that have found a home

away from home is full of lies and duplicities. A diasporic citizen may very likely find economic betterment in the new home, but this very often is allied with a sense of political-cultural loss. (174)

All the migrants are the evident of diasporic pain. The situation is not on behalf of them. Yes, no doubt, the diasporic people might be successful to retrieve economic prosperity, they can reach from the beginning state to the top of economic betterment. They have no other alternative to escape from inbetween situation between homeland and new land. R. Radhakrishnan through this book *Diasporic Mediation* dissects the milieus of diasporic identity and says that he is a pure mediator between his father and son. It means that he is an agent of *Diasporic Mediation*, he has got to play the significant role of mediation between homeland and new land. He accepts that it is a painful process for the migrants so as to balance the mediating role between the two cultural poles: "that of the present location and that of its past" (176).

He has the sense of cultural loss. He has lost his identity. The migrants who are known as the people of diasporic identity, feel constant erosion of identity, the identity s/he would have in his past mother land. It is the concept, through which it can be understood that the people living between two historic are undergoing the pain of difficulty in having a concrete identity. Diasporic pain is the traumatic situation of the migrant in new land. If we significantly try to analyze how the diasporic identity is the painful process of fluid location, it vividly seems that the people with double experience don't feel complete, rather the compulsion of assimilating both sides at the same time, creates anxiety, confusion and alienation, so these situations among the diasporic people help us understand about the issue 'diasporic pain'. Radhakrishnan

further says:

The location is also one of painful incommensurable simultaneity: the Chinese/Indian past as contemporary and memory (depending upon one's actual generational remove from one's "native" land) coexists with the modern or the postmodern present within a relationship that promises neither transcendence nor return. (175)

Here, through these expressions he wants to clarify about the pain of diasporic location. He says that that milieu between the past homeland and the present new land is the place of coexistence and assimilation; we, contextualizing migrant as diasporic people, can say it is the pain of the migrants as they are between two realities within the same present time. The migrant can not be totally detached from his native land because he has taken with him his mores and identity as memory, which does not help him to exist well there in the foreign home. The present reality of the new land, where he has arrived as a process of migration, he is compelled to co-exist there. Really, neither he can transcend the oppressive new land nor can return to his own land.

Immigration is the most crucial element behind the concept of diaspora. Since the text used in this dissertation is related to diasporic pain, it is more than relevant to discuss fully about the diaspora. Not only the concept of diaspora first originated through the realm of immigration but also later it developed into the form of its other extensive discourses like postcolonialism, nationalism, hybridity, and multiculturalism. For instance, if diaspora is historically traced back, its initial definition goes to refer to the exclusively dispersion of Jewish almost 4000 years ago. Although its concept has been epistemologically and semantically derived from

that of dispersal experiences of those ancient Jewish people of that distance past in the present context, it has come to merge in the postcolonial theory which has enormously triggered all intellectuals and academia over some past decades.

Focusing on the similar point, an Indian critic Maniit Indra Singh notes:

The meaning of the term "diaspora" if split into two, connotes dia (apart) and speirean (Greek meaning to scatter or "to sow", provides a useful development.) While in both ancient and modern thought the former meaning has tended to dominate the latter meaning, with its promise of replanting rerooting, and subsequent growth, may be gaining momentum. (106)

As we see the history of European and British expansion in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, we find that a large number of Indians, Africans and Asians were enforced to leave their homelands and taken to foreign countries as slaves and indentured labourers for plantations. And they had no choice other than to live through the disporic identity land as disporas. In the same manner during the Second World War casualties were heavy and the normal lives of people were badly disrupted that made them flee helplessly as war victims and refugees to foreign countries. Later most of them chose to settle out there in foreign countries permanently as the second-class citizens even after the wars got over in their native countries, thus they became diasporas. After the colonial independence in the colonized countries like India, Africa, Argentina, Australia and others, even in the case of colonizers, some masters did not return to their home in Europe or Britain rather continued to stay in the same countries with the native people so they became a part of Diaspora as well. Ashcroft, correlating the similar meaning of ancient

diaspora with the modern context, points out:

The very origin of term is political (from Greek- to disperse) as it connotes a "voluntary or forcible movements of the peoples from their homelands into new regions." From this prospective, the twin projects of colonialism and empire building were "radical diasporic movements. (69)

After the political Independence from the colonial power and regime, in many countries the national movements began with strategies of reforming their countries left with devastations by their colonial masters, but later when the nationalists got failed in their mission people began to get disillusioned, and the rapid succession of capitalism and the globalisation pushed them westwards. So, people started to migrate westwards in search of better and promising future ahead. This process of migration is still in continuation and presumably increasing at much higher rate. Consequently, diaspora has been indispensable issue of the present global context.

Nevertheless, the migration led by the imperial European or British In term of cheap laborers and slaves, or the migration that occurred in the period of late-Capitalism and the globalization in the postcolonial phase; both of these modes of migrations have more awfully made migrants displaced from their homelands. Therefore, in this diasporic state their sense of exile, their nostalgia for homelands, their sense of humiliation over the identity crisis that they face with and sometimes even their feeling of 'in-betweenness' especially sensed by the descendants of diasporas become extremely intense and irrepressible that some diasporic writers have recreated their very diasporal sensitivities into the fabulous literary writings. An Indian critic Sudhir Kumar points out:

The diasporic consciousness, as some critics aver, presupposes the predominance of such feelings as alienation, dispersal, longing for the ancestral homeland, a double identification with the original homeland and the adopted country (the *des-pardes* dialectic), identity crisis, remembering myths related to the homeland, protest against discrimination of all sorts in a new land etc., the metaphor of imaginary homelands does cum up the conditions of the diasporic communities well. (70)

Diasporic writings basically focus on issues of migrant people; it's an outcome of their experiences the experiences which basically tell us stories of their lives, within their immigrant background. As migrants resettle in the foreign countries, things does not seem easy to them because they have to face a lot of different problems in terms of all aspects like culture, language, food and others. No matter, how much adaptive they seem, they always have to feel marginalized from the mainstream of the society of their second home. In the eyes of native people, they are always looked as outsiders. Therefore, the cases like cultural conflict and identity crisis seem very high on them. Similarly, these very elements are the prospects that do frequently come up in the context of diasporic writings.

Diasporic writings capture both the problems and experiences of migrants. For instance, in the case of cultural identity loss, they seem trying to recollect their past through the help of memories, nostalgia and familial myth. Regarding it, Ondaajte's novel "*Running in the Family*" is one noted example. In the novel, we find the theme of recollecting the lost identity of writer's old homeland portrayed very significantly. Similarly, migrants' early experience over the adaptation problem

within that of different foreign culture and lifestyle, and the cultural shock they receive at first seeing the western world are also other common elements which often do occur in diasporic writings. However, throughout this kind of writing effort, they not only re-visualize their history of origin, offer the reader all exotics and fantasies of their homelands, and compel us to re-examine about its authenticity, they also more importantly reaffirm their own distinct identity out of diaspora. Therefore, on the account of immigrant people both as recreating their history and making an appeal for their marginalized identity, the diasporic writings hold the significant position in the literary genre and, undoubtedly, it has been very popular between both readers and writers. For instance, in the context of South-Asians experiences mainly in Indian diasporic writings, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Amit Chaudhuri, Bharati Mukherjee have been writing in English from diverse diasporic locations. There are even other European, African and Asian writers who fall under this category and most of their works are immensely popular and many literary awards-winning as well. Among the South-Asian experience, particularly arguing about the Indian writing, Sudhir Kumar remarks:

While the pre-independence Indian writer abroad worked through nostalgia, memory and a possible dependence on Indian philosophy, creating a mythical past from them or alternatively a return to India and a redefining of the self within the trope of patriotism (Seepersad, Naipaul, Raja Rao. Shantha Rama Fau and the westernized Indian intellectuals like Nehru fall into this category), the writer of the post-independence period works through other constructions. (82)

Despite the immense popularity in Diasporic writing, the theory of diaspora is not

free from controversies. The diasporic writers and theorists have been assailed for being inauthentic and misrepresenting the reality. As again Sudhir Kumar comments:

The narratives of the diasporas are framed by memory and distance and motivated by a desire to construct their own reality. For the culture back home their writing fulfils a role similar to that of an "Introduction" to a translated text. It sets out the parameters and the principles for interpreting the text, for decoding it, and as such it limits reader, a space which does not necessarily belong to it. (87)

Arguably, in the case of diasporic novels, sometimes the development of characters like their ultimate success in westernizing themselves completely by abandoning their past oriental values, which they brought up practicing, somehow tends to be ironic and controversial both. Their very transition becomes a challenging twist on the mode of diasporic writing especially-regarding its part of reaffirming their identity because in their such transformed state, the characters seem to have been split between their dual identities rather than redefined in a singular identity. For instance, in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1986), such case is quite apparent. In the novel, as the main protagonist Jasmine migrates to America from India, she goes through a lot of psychological problems and strains, but eventually in terms of learning to cope with her problems she kills her own husband and transforms herself into a completely different character from that of typical conventional one.

Thus, the works of this nature not only deconstruct the diasporic world but also throw up its own challenges. In such pattern of writing, we find the immigrant character abandoning the old identity than reaffirming it. So, at this point, the idea of reaffirming old identity does not fit instead it seems rejected. However, other pattern

of diasporic novels could be different like we do not find all immigrant characters being able to overcome their confusions and problems in the way Jasmine does. Instead, they tend to be getting more confused rather than finding any possible way to out. Therefore, as they get torn between their country of origin and their country of residence, their suffering and sense of attention intensify and in the same desperate situation, they try to reinvent in memories and nostalgia which eventually helps them to reaffirm their lost identity. Notably, in diasporic novels not only the characters seem confused but sometimes in the same manner it makes reader confused as well. For instance, the work of a diasporic writer attracts the attention of two different sets of readers. The west looks for familiar landmarks, a West-center vision, while the average other reader seeks his own validity.

III. Diasporic Pain in Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories*

The migrants like Alfred, Maya, Jasmine, Panna and Shaila Bhave as representative characters from Mukherjee's anthology *The Middle Man and Other Stories* have undergone painful awareness in having concrete identity of diasporic dwelling. Almost all the characters are both originally born and brought up in their ancestors' land or have had some flavors of their ancestry in their innate self. They have their own timidity and are unable to do up to their expectation. Some characters lack determination while the others have the compulsion of mimicking the western culture to make them dignified like the advanced westerners. The characters in all the stories are bound to face the humiliation unknowingly imposed by the natives. The characters like Alfred Judah have overshadowed their real identity and have the tendency to dilute their own identity in terms of acclimatizing themselves into the new environment. They neither adjust themselves there nor can come back to their ancestors' land at any cost. They rather have to remain there for whole life. They are bound to follow the unwanted and wanted cultures, both odds and evens of the land they are residing in. Undoubtedly, the major characters reveal the real picture of the people who are from non-western ancestry. The characters are finally found adapted to the new environment through undergoing different hardships in different alien cultures.

Once a person has detached its motherland from all the ways, he/she has no way out to come back or readjust in the motherland. The person has to be made to order in the new society sooner or later. Hence the same situation is found in the characters of the stories taken from the book for analysis. Even if the characters at first find extremely difficult to acclimatize themselves in the alien land later they find

themselves naturalized and familiar in course of time. This shows that the characters are mediating themselves even though it is late. There are several factors for making them experience the painful moments. In some cases the characters themselves are the cause of their troubles while in some the displacement of their alienated self is the cause.

In *A Wife's Story*, a married woman from India, comes to America in the process of completing her especial education course. It focuses on well educated Indian women. This woman has even gone so far as to befriend another lonely migrant, a Hungarian named Imre, who also has a spouse and family back home in the old country. Imre helps her to survive assaults on her dignity and the hopelessness of not truly belonging. He comforts her after a David Mamet play in which she must endure terrible lines about Indians. She sometimes impulsively hugs Imre on the street. When her husband arrives for a visit, she realizes how many of the changes in her own behavior she now takes for granted. She dresses in a beautiful sari and her heavy, ornate wedding jewelry to greet him at JFK Airport. But underneath the familiar customs she is not the same woman at all. The end of the story encapsulates both the strength of her spirited struggle to refashion herself and the difficulty of achieving wholeness when one is stretched between two cultures

In this story, the central character, the wife or Panna at first has fully got dualism in her character. In one context she says:

It's not my fault; *it's the situation*. Old colonies wear down. Patels-the new pioneers-have to be suspicious. Idi Amin's lesson is permanent. AT&T wires move good advice from continent to continent. Keep all assets liquid. Get into 7-11s; get out of condos and motels. I know how

both sides feel, that's the trouble. The Patel sniffing out scams, the sad salesmen on the stage: Postcolonialism has made me their referee. It's hate I long for; simple, brutish, partisan hate." (27)

Panna in this context is found to be in a situation of dilemma. She is expressing her extreme frustration representing the pain and traumatic experience of the migrants. She further tells that the cause of the pain Diasporas is not their behavior but the domination of the brutish white. She has to be in dual nature as she has to get herself modified with the novel environment and development in the society. Moreover she has some obligations of her own native culture which has indelible mark in the mind.

I chance out of the cotton pants and shirt I've been wearing all day and put on a sari to meet my husband at JFK. I don't forget the jewelry; the marriage necklace of *mangalsutra*, gold drops earrings, heavy gold bangles. I don't wear them every day. In this borough of vice and greed, who knows when, or whom, desire will overwhelm.(33)

However, she has to get herself accustomed to the new and completely strange culture in comparison to her native culture. In terms of her adjustment with the newness she comes across, she even pretends herself innocent to her near and dear husband where she is found completely unnatural to the American people who used to find her different from her normal days on arrival of her husband in the airport.

In this story, the migrant, Panna Bhatt is attending a performance of David Mamet's play *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) in New York City with Imre, another immigrant separated, as she is, from his mate. They are not lovers, but they share the intimate friendship that only alienated foreigners in an adopted country can know; theirs is the mutual bond of strangers in a strange land. She thinks the play insults her

culture and also insults her as a woman. She is so offended that she decides to write to Mamet to protest his depiction of East Indians. The former character from the eastern pole while the other from the western pole of the globe share such intimacy as the immigrants' predicaments are similar in a new foreign land. Imre, through heart and soul tries his level best to convince Panna for getting adjusted with the bitter criticisms made by the American people.

A Wife's Story is an excellent example of encounters between cultures presented in a narrative of encounters between women and men and also the reversal of two cultures: an eastern culture dominated by the western culture. It is a fascinating story because it presents the surprise of role reversal and because of the sense of a dramatic presentation that permeates the story.

The cultural encounters of the character are expressed in these lines below, the marriage of a Hindu girl with the parents' preference is totally according to Hindu tradition but she is in a land where all the character can independently decide about their life and marriage. But the speaker here is feeling strange and reveals how she got married.

What's so strange about that, I want to ask. She still loves Eric, and Eric, red jumpsuit and all, is smart enough to know it. Love is a commodity, hoarded like any other. Mamet knows. But I say, "I'm not the person to ask about love." Charity knows that mine was a traditional Hindu marriage. My parents, with the help of a marriage broker, who was my mother's cousin, picked out a groom. All I had to do was get to know his taste in food. (31)

The story also contains echoes of the memory and nostalgia for the past that play a significant role in the writings of many South Asian-Americans. This memory and nostalgia for the landscape of places and people of the writers' childhood is often juxtaposed with the excitement and challenge of their new life and the unfamiliar landscape of the people and places of the U.S. It is interesting to explore how Mukherjee uses these two strands in this story, bringing one or the other--memory or the excitement of novelty--into the foreground to present her characters and to build the circular, winding pattern of her story. These two strands in the story makes crystal clear that the two totally dissimilar cultures, find hard to adjust at first but later in course of time mediation is seen in both. There might be many troubles and obstacles to follow their own mother culture but later the characters follow both taking major parts from the new land and its culture.

It is the wife, not the husband, who has come to America and who is knowledgeable about this new home. Panna is the guide and often the protector for her husband who is visiting her. And her story is constantly dramatic. It begins with her in a theatre and every episode that follows is carefully situated in a stage-like setting with set actors. This dramatic story is significant for the expression of Diasporas pain and the reconciliation of the characters. Panna to forget her traumas, adopted lustful culture with the Americans and got adjusted herself, but when her husband comes to America she pretends to be totally the loyal wife as before. She finds her husband helping her in the kitchen and other domestic works which he never helped her in India:

This has to be love, I think. Charity, Eric, Phil: They may be expert on sex. My husband does not chase me around the sofa, but he pushes me

down on Charity's battered cushions, and the man who has never entered the kitchen of our Ahmadabad house now comes toward me with a dish tub of steamy water to massage away the pavement heat.(35)

She feels happy to learn that her husband also supported her in the adoption of new culture she gained in her course of living in America. Here we can find that a new culture has, predominantly helped the mother culture to dilute its identity with fewer flavors. The Hindu and the Christian culture are found to be merging together with the dominance of the later culture. Moreover, it is found that it is the husband who compromises with the wife, but finally, the husband fails to convince his wife to come back with him to India. Instead of telling or sharing her hardships in getting adjusted in the new alien land she pretends completely Panna:

I wait, unclothed, for my husband to come back to me. The water is running in the bathroom. In the ten days he has been here he has learned American rites: deodorants, fragrances. Tomorrow morning he'll call Air India; tomorrow evening he'll be on his way back Bombay. Tonight I should make up to him for my years away, the gutted truck, and the degree I'll never use in India. I want to pretend with him that nothing has change.(40)

The protagonist of *The Wife's Story* has walked out of the traditional Hindu Marriage, left Ahmadabad for Manhattan where she experiences freedom and individuality. She learns a great deal from the way charity chin's lurid love life has "replaced inherited notions of marital duty." honest like she had been before.

Her ability to let us hear her characters speak to us not only about themselves but as narrators of others' experiences is a reflection of the oral traditions of Indian literature. In "A Wife's Story," we can hear Panna telling us not only the many stories of her life in India and in New York but also the stories of the people she introduces to us. Panna becomes successful in carrying out both the cultural trends together, although it was sometimes swindling and deceiving one for her husband.

Mukherjee's careful manipulation of moods and emotional tones in her stories may be influenced by classical Indian literature, art, and music. In Indian classical art, the universally recognizable essence of an emotion or a mood often dominates the work of art. In *A Wife's Story*, Mukherjee portrays Panna through her emotions and moods that move from anger and outrage to perplexity and frustration, to humor and affection, and in the end to the joy of self-discovery of her body and her sense of freedom:

In the mirror that hangs on the bathroom door, I watch my naked body turn, the breast, the thighs glow. The body's beauty amazes. I stand here shameless, in ways he has never seen me. I am free, afloat, watching somebody else. (40)

Even the memory of old customs and the excitement of new discoveries for both Panna and her husband are presented in terms of emotions and moods. All these show that Panna represents both the culture. She, however, is found mostly inclining towards American culture in the later part although she could not forget her upbringings and moldings of her personality in her early days of marriage in her in-laws' house. In the beginning part of the story, in one context, she expresses her feeling of dissatisfaction towards the explanation of Indian's nature by the dramatist.

She says

Imre and the cabdriver talk away in Russian. I keep my eyes closed.
That way I can feel the floaters better. I'll write Mamet tonight. I feel
strong reckless. May be I'll write Steven Spielberg too; tell him that
Indians do not eat monkey brains. (29)

In this context we can easily understand that she was at the beginning defending Indian by all means but later she started feeling herself familiar with the Americans and hence goes to mediating with the new culture. She had many traumas and humiliating experiences in her initial stays in America.

Reading the following statement of Panna, we can easily conclude that she has started disliking Indian clothes like saris and other highly cultural clothes. She says "I unpleat my silk sari- it no longer looks too showy-wrap it in muslin cloth and put it away in a dresser drawer."(31) This expression is reflection of fading away of Indianess in Panna. Likewise, an Indian woman, already married, goes to the difficulties in having a concrete identity. After she left her homeland India, she seems to have represented the dual reality of diasporic psyche. She is not only a wife, more than this, she speaks the traumatic psychic experience of those women who have been exploited by diasporic situation of identity crises. She is there for completing her educational course Ph.D. It is a great challenging for her to exist well because of the new milieu and its different factors. She has to bear whatever she gets in an insulting way.

We find many contexts of an Indian immigrant's perception and experience of the insulting representations of non-white immigrants on Broadway and the subjective effects of the indifference and ignorance with which these representations are

received by the dominant white community. Such contexts also are very significant for explaining that there were some traumatic experiences involved in mediating the non-white people into the totally white one.

Virtually all of the stories examine the compromises, losses, and adjustment involved in the process of acculturating new commerce to American life and most of the migrant characters in this collection are caught between two worlds and cultures. The volume's title story is narrated by Alfred Judah from Baghdad, an individual regularly mistaken for an Arab or an Indian. When not on the job, he lives in flushing, queens, and he was once married to an American, but he nonetheless, feels like an eternal outsider. For he says "there are expects of American life I came too late for and will never understand" (5). As such he remains on the margins by working for an illicit border - jumper, gun smuggler Clovis T. Ransome.

In the title story, *The Middleman*, Alfie Judah, the narrator of the story, is a Jew who is originally from Baghdad, Iraq, but is now a naturalized U.S. citizen, appears to be a widely traveled man, having lived in Bombay, India, but he is also someone who does not really fit in wherever he goes. His American home is in Flushing, in the borough of Queens, New York, and he has an American wife. Alfie is a wheeler-dealer and a hustler who is not too fussy about how he makes his money. He gets people what they need, whether it is guns, drugs, or cars, and he knows how to survive in a rough world. He was forced to flee the United States, however, because the authorities discovered an illicit fund he was maintaining for New Jersey judges. He says:

“My options were limited “. A modest provident fund I’d been maintaining for New Jersey judges was discovered. My fresh new citizenship is always in jeopardy. My dealings can't stand too much investigation." (5)

So he ends up in Central America and attaches himself for the time being to Ransome, although he expects to be able to return to the United States eventually. Alfie is dark-skinned, which means that he is spared the hatred the local people have for Americans. No one knows how to place him; to some he is an Arab, to others an Indian. Alfie's weakness, he confesses, is women. He lusts after Maria and somehow manages to win her favors, if only for one night, and he suffers no consequences for this act of adultery. He also survives when the guerrillas come to kill Ransome. No one cares much about Alfie, so the guerrillas do not bother to kill him. As a result, he survives and seems to relish the prospect of walking in to San Vicente, the capital city, talking to people, and finding some other way of keeping himself afloat.

All these activities and predicaments of Alfie prove that he has had many traumatic experiences in his life. He even does not care for losing his identity in the name of earning name and fame, especially while trying to gain economic prosperity he even dilutes his nationality. Confusion among the people about Alfie makes us understand that he never belonged to those mentioned nation. To forget all his traumas, he opts for enjoying life with lusts:

Casually, she is unbuttoning her top, untying the bottom tabs. The cutoffs have to be tugged off, around her hips. There is a rush of passion I have never known, and my fingers trembled as I tug at my belt. She is in my giant bed, propped up, and her breasts keep the seat from falling. (18)

He invests so much of energy, time and money for the lustful gain. He enjoys himself while having sex but later he feels s completely dissatisfied. This situation makes it clear that all the activities he does are symbolically reddish in color. It is something like blood stained bullets. The character expresses his trauma in these lines and tells that as it is compulsory for him to deal with the traumas he has, so he says he needs comfortable place to deal with his traumatic condition.

We go inside the command shack. It's one-room affair, very clean, but dark and cluttered. I'm not sure I should sit on the narrow cot; it seems to be a catchall for the domestic details of revolution-sleeping bags, maps and charts, an empty canteen, two pairs of second hand empty boots. I need a comfortable place to deal with my traumas. There is a sofa of sorts, actually a car seat pushed tight against a wall and stabilized with bits of lumber. There are bullet holes through the fabric, rusty stains that can only be blood. (13)

Here we can conclude that he knowingly had such traumatic experience as there was no alternative for him to get adjusted. He also lacked power of determination and hence had to face many troubles in course of his living in America. He finally underwent many deep-delving and reconciles about his life and the experiences. Therefore, he concludes the story with little optimistic tone from the former part of the story. He seems to have talked about happiness for the first time like this:

In the next few days when I run out of food, I'll walk down the muddy road to San Vicente; to the German bar with the pay phone...Someone in the capital will be happy to know about Santa Simon, about Bud,

Clovis. There must be something worth trading in the troubles I have seen. (21)

He, in this expression, does not simply talk about himself but about all the characters in the story. We can understand from the expression that even in the pains those characters underwent, there is something to be brought with happiness. Happiness can be there which he means in the phrase "worth trading". This positive note of the narrator is very important in the sense that there is some sort of happiness in the final stage of diasporic pain in all the cases. Even if there has to be many troublesome experiences to be undergone by the migrants' character, they finally go for reconciliation at the sooner or later stage.

Other two characters Clovis T. Ransome and Maria Ransome (husband and wife) are also found to be having many traumatic experiences even if their culture is somehow adjustable in comparison to Judah's culture of many complexities.

Clovis T. Ransome is an expatriate American who, according to Alfie, has "spent his adult life in tropical paradises playing God." Ransome fled Waco, Texas, with fifteen million dollars in petty cash that he had obtained fraudulently. He just managed to escape the investigators from the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC). Ransome is a player in the ruthless political game that operates in the unnamed country. It appears that he runs a protection racket to shield President Gutiérrez from his many enemies. This may have been how he acquired the beautiful Maria as his wife, since Maria was formerly the president's mistress. Maria hates her husband and claims that he beats her. Ransome is a violent, amoral man who arranges for the guerrillas to kill his friend Bud Wilkins, because Bud had refused to allow Ransome to become part of his gun-running operation. But Ransome also falls foul of

the guerrillas, for reasons unstated, and when they confront him in his room, Maria shoots and kills him with Andreas's pistol.

Maria Ransome is a beautiful young, dark-skinned woman, mostly Indian, who is married to Clovis T. Ransome. It is a loveless marriage, however. When she was a girl, Maria planned to marry Andreas, but Gutiérrez, now president but then minister of education, came to her school when she was fourteen and took her for himself. Later, Maria was, so the talk goes, "partially bought and partially seduced" by Ransome. There is a rumor that Maria comes from an aristocratic family and is a former beauty queen. She is the object of all men's lust, including that of Alfie and Bud Wilkins. She allows Alfie to spend the night with her when they return from the guerrilla camp and her husband is in a drunken sleep. However, her loyalty is to Andreas. She helps the guerrillas acquire the armaments that are loaded in Bud Wilkins's pickup, and when the guerrillas confront Ransome, Maria coolly shoots her husband.

When we characterize this couple, it is known that they both have their own ways of life. Even if they were husband and wife they did not have enough love for each other. They both were found to be in many murderous activities and their pains were hidden within them. The traumatic experiences of the couple's life are unveiled when Mrs. Ransome shoots her husband sans mercy. Shooting in cold blood is something a like a lovely kill. This sounds paradoxical but it is the security a wife could only give in such situations, if she did not shoot her husband he would be shot brutally by the enemies so we find a kind of mediation in this. A mediation I found when Mr. Ransome is safely killed. He would be surely killed by someone or the cops

as he had been involved in many illegal trades, so it was the best safety that a wife could give even if the required love of the couple was not seen anywhere in the story.

Likewise in the other story *The Tenant* similar fate is found in the activities of characters. The protagonist Maya Sanyal who belongs to Indian ancestry via Trinidad to the USA, finds herself happy with the liberal lifestyle of the country of her career building destination. Despite of her social taboos taught in her childhood by her parents, she finds herself comfortable with her parents' "vulgar" lifestyle. She consistently faces all the situations that come across in her endeavor to gain her education. She finally finds very familiar with the lifestyle of America, not simply in her habit but seemingly in her inner self. Her taste of American life was totally a source of enjoyment in the later part of her life. Sanyal has experience of all types of people to fulfill her sexual desires. While authenticating her changed lifestyle she never hesitates to criticize her mother culture. Though she entered America through illegal way via Canada she audaciously presents herself with a dignity in present day society.

The Tenant goes to the other extreme by showing how an attractive middle class, young Bengali woman becomes vulnerable when she breaks with her traditional ways and tries to become part of main stream America. Maya Sanyal from Calcutta came to the United States ten years earlier, at the age of nineteen. In smooth succession she received a Ph.D., married an American, became a naturalized citizen got divorced and now teaches comparative literature in Cedar Falls, Iowa. During that time she has had indiscriminately slept with all kinds of men except Indian, in a seemingly ambivalent disclaimer of the constrictive gender mores of her homeland. Now, afraid that her bachelor landlord might make sexual advances towards her, she

calls the other Bangali Professor on Campus, Dr. Chatterji, and secures an invitation to ten. The traditional atmosphere of his life prompts a newly awakened longing for her homeland, even as his pathetic attempt at seduction leaves her embarrassed. Tired of the fact that her unattached status makes her vulnerable to the lust of every passing male and newly nostalgic for her homeland tradition, she responds to an Indian abroad matrimonial advertisement from a country man seeking:

Hello ! Hi! Yes, you are the one I'm looking for. You are the new emancipated Indo-American woman. You have a zest for life. You are at ease in USA and yet your ethics are rooted in Indian tradition. The man of your dream has come. Yours truly is handsome, ear-nose-throat specialist, physically fit, sport manly and strong. I adore idealism, poetry, beauty. I abhor smugness, passivity, caste system. Write with recent photo. Better still, call!!! (109)

To her surprise as she meets Ashok Mehta at the Chicago airport. She suddenly feels as if a "Hindu God" is descending to woo her - handsome Indian men who have indeed merged his two cultures in ways that seem to make them destined for each other. In this context we find the expression of Maya's hidden pain and grief.

Mukherjee's next story *The Tenant* is more successful and artistically finished than some of the earlier ones discussed here, Maya Sanyal, a Ph. D. in Comparative Literature teaches World Literature at the University Of Northern Iowa. For Maya, "no folly is ever lost". For, history is a net, the kind of safety net traveling trapeze artists fall into, when inattentive or clumsy. In this story the main character, Maya, expresses a\ many nostalgic things about Indian women and also expresses something

about the characteristics of male Indian. It is to be cited in the following expression of the narrator:

She (Maya) realizes Indian women are supposed to be inventive with food, whip up exotic delights to tickle an American's palate, and she knows she should be meeting Fran's generosity and candor with some sort of bizarre and effortless countermove. (98)

In this statement we find totally the blend of two cultures trying to get some agreement in the middle. The Indian women making tongue tickling food items for American is totally a hybrid flavor. It is ironic and paradoxical but it is also the reality of the migrated Indian to satisfy American by complete efforts. A wife who gets married with the American has to follow the norms and mores of western culture. Maya further expresses that Indian males are not good as compared to females. She says "All Indian men are wife beaters". In this context she means to say that she did not get married with Indian as they beat and harass wives. She got married with American man, according to her all the American are kind-hearted and loving. She further hints that Americans are little bit liberal in comparison to Indian. But, however she has some nostalgia of Indian food and clothes and festival in her expression.

The next story *Jasmine* is the story of an ambitious Trinidadian girl, who, through a middle man, illegally enters into US and goes to work first in the motel of the Indian family who helped her get there, and later as a "mother's helper ..." (128) for an American family. When her American employers ask about her family and she deceives them. She constructs a suitable tolerable narrative of her past and her roots. She is attempting to make a positive narrative of her life in the new world. Jasmine tries hard to cut all ties with "anything too Islandy " (131) as she struggles to reshape

herself in America. Though she cleans, cooks and irons for the Moffits, she never stops giving thanks for having found such "a small, clean, friendly family.... to build her new life around" (130). She constantly thanks Jesus for her good luck.

Now in the process of revealing the suffering of the migrants characters as well as the traumatic experience associated with identity crisis mentioned above like Alfred in the *Middleman* Panna in a *Wife Story*, Maya Sanyal in *The Tenant* and Jasmine in *Jasmine*, are the representative migrants who directly or indirectly help Mukherjee to depict real painful voice of diasporic scenario. Alfred Juddha, the migrant seems as a man without any concrete identity. Nobody knows him that who he is. He has been compelled to leave the underground existence, during this time he is running to have a good survival even if the work he does, is too much risky. He has lost his real identity there because of his encounter with alien circumstances. Though his past as well as traditional beliefs do not help him, he can not totally be unmindful to it and on the other hand the wages of the new land is not separate from him if he wants to survive there in the alien culture. There, he has been imprisoned between two way of cultural identity that creates anxiety confusion and dilemma into his psyche. He feels chaotic inside him and he in a situation of "to be or not to be" in some of the cases, but later he realizes and accepts the ground reality.

In the same line the story *Jasmine*, the title character Jasmine who has experiences of many countries, has so many ups and downs in her life time. She came to Detroit through the way of Canada illegally and realizes her obligations to get adjusted herself in the new land. The pain of migrated people is clear in the activities of Jasmine as she has to take many risks to make herself legal. She has to do the work

whatever it may be as she does not have any legal documents to get respectable jobs there in alien land.

Mukherjee's *Jasmine* destined to be developed into a novel a later date, begins to be a matter of fact way. Jasmine, the title character, came to Detroit from Port Of Spain, Trinidad, by way of Canada. She is explained to illegally residing in all the countries where she resided. It tells the story of Indian woman from Trinidad who enters the U.S. illegally and ends up working in the household of a liberal academic family in Ann Arbor. Mukherjee employs a light touch in her portrayal of the differences between the savvy Jasmine and her well-intentioned but naive employers. The story steers clear of sentimentality while still making us acutely aware of the precariousness of an illegal immigrant's life and the yawning gulf of power between the rich and poor parts of the world. We can easily find a big gap between the character Jasmine and her fellow friends. In one instance Lara never gets time to tell about American ways of cooking and preparing food to Jasmine. The following lines prove that she is not fully supported to get adjusted there in the new ways of life.

She (Lara) did not spend the time she had between rehearsals telling Jasmine how to cook and clean American style. Mrs. Daboo did that in 16 B. Mrs. Daboo would barge in with a plate of stale *samosas* and snoop around giving free advice on how mainstream Americans did things. (133)

At first Jasmine finds really difficult to learn about doing things and hence it became a traumatic experience for her but later the same thing became familiar and she was happy to do. She learnt all those things through some humiliating efforts among the Native Americans.

As a meditation on what it means to be an immigrant and what it means to be an American, the story *Jasmine* is a worthwhile read. For forgetting her pains and agonies she has to opt for even illicit mean but it might be a momentary one. The character, who immigrates to America illegally, goes through an agonizing but ultimately fulfilling process of personal development as evinced by the following lines from the text one.

She was thinking this as they made love on the Turkish carpet in front of the fire: she was a bright, pretty girl with no visa, no papers, and no birth certificate. No nothing other than what she wanted to invent and tell. She was a girl rushing wildly into the future.

His hand moved up her throat and forced her lips apart and it felt so good, so right, that she forgot all the dreariness of her new life and gave herself up to it. (138)

Migrants are the hybridized objects. They are hybridized because of dual reality between the native and new culture. Of course, past always attracts them and present compels them to exist. No other ways for them to escape from this process of hybridity. It is not easy for them to celebrate the diasporic life, rather various kinds of cultural problems makes them ambiguous.

When cultures collide with each other, it is the most painful situation for them because they have to compromise and lose something like the mores they would live on, in the past. They are injected the western ideologies, which is the responsible fact of colonization. They are in the 'in between' space like a child, who wants his mother but always feet lack of her because of fatherlike presence of western ideologies before him.

It is theorized that hybrid situation mediates between native culture and the new way of new land. Cultural hybridity is taken as the factor to play the role of mediation between two worlds and cultures. It is believed to balance both of these cultural poles. Hybrid space has the double vision as well as consciousness through which it does not make pessimistic rather teaches to be optimistic. It is the reality of those migrants, who even if, get into trouble, do not forget past, motherland and diasporic reality in the hope of existing well. Regarding the *Diasporic Mediation*, though, all of the migrant are on the 'assimilation of contraries', it is found that they finally get adjusted with a positive expectation of life. In another sense, migrants are the hybrid characters, who have the real experience of diasporic identity. Diasporic identity is made of 'assimilation of contraries'. Here also we can find those migrants assimilating the contrary pull of native and new culture.

Almost all the characters in the collection are from non-western background and have completely dissimilar upbringings of their mother culture. Most of them are from Asian background and have the totally different cultural complexities. Some characters are from India while some are from other Asian nations like Bagdad. Some characters are from the Hindu community while other they belong to either Muslim or Christian. But, whatever the case may be they are bound to adapt themselves with the new, so called 'advanced culture' in the western land, despite their originality. They can't fully dilute their mother culture as we sometimes find characters expressing something of their culture's merits. They seem to be nostalgic in some cases but later in the concluding part of all the stories the characters are found to be acclimatized and adjusted with the new culture.

The last story in the collection, *The Management of Grief* opens with the chaos at Shaila Bhave's Toronto home. Her house is filled with strangers, gathered together for legal advice, company, and tea. Dr. Sharma, his wife, their children, Kusum and "a lot of women [Shaila] do[esn't] know".(179) are trying to make sense of the crash of Air India Flight 182, simultaneously listening to multiple radios and televisions to catch some news about the event. The Sharma boys murmur rumors that Sikh terrorists had planted a bomb. Shaila narrates the scene from a haze, speaking with detached, shell-shocked calm. The Valium she has been taking contributes to her stable appearance, but inside she feels "tensed, ready to scream."(180) Imagined cries from her husband and sons "insulate her"(180) from the anxious activity in her house. All these activities are found to be traumatic experiences of the migrants in the destined land.

In a context, Shaila reminisces about Kusum and Satish's recent house-warming party that brought cultures and generations together in their sparkling, spacious suburban home: "even white neighbors piled their plates high with [tandoori]" and Shaila's own Americanized sons had "broken away" from a Stanley Cup telecast to come to the party. Shaila somberly wonders "and now . . . how many of those happy faces are gone"(181). This is nothing other than a trauma of the migrant.

Implicitly Shaila feels "punished" for the good success of Indian immigrant families like hers and Kusum's. Kusum brings her out of her reverie with the question: "Why does God give us so much if all along He intends to take it away?"(181).

This is evidence that there is gap between the two cultures and hence the characters are feeling nostalgic about their mother land and culture. There is a reflection of traumatic feelings in her tone in a migrated land.

Shaila regrets her perfect obedience to upper-class, Indian female decorum. She has, for instance, never called her husband by his first name or told him that she loved him. Kusum comforts her saying: "It's alright," Kusum says. He knew. My husband knew. They felt it. Modern young girls have to say it because what they feel is fake."(181). However, they lived in Canada for a long period of time they were still following the norms and values of Indian people.

Kusum's first daughter Pam walks into the room and orders her mother to change out of her bathrobe since reporters are expected. Pam, a manifest example of the "modern young girls"(181) that Kusum disdains, had refused to go to India with her father and younger sister, preferring to spend that summer working at McDonald's. Mother and daughter exchange harsh words, and Pam accuses Kusum of wishing that Pam had been on the plane, since the younger daughter was a better "Indian." Kusum does not react verbally. Since this child is born and brought up in the new culture, she is having the clear mark of Canadian modern culture. It might be little difficult for the parents to digest their offspring's' behavior, but there is no way out for them to find alternatives.

Judith Templeton, a Canadian social worker, visits Shaila, hoping Shaila can facilitate her work with the relatives of the deceased. Judith is described as young, comely and professional to a fault. She enlists Shaila to give the "right human touch"(183) to the impersonal work of processing papers for relief funds. Judith tells Shaila that she was chosen because of her exemplary calm and describes her as a

“pillar”(183) of the devastated Indian Canadian community. Shaila explains that her seemingly cool, unaffected demeanor is hardly admired by her community, who expect their members to mourn publicly and vocally. She is puzzled herself by “this terrible calm will not go away”(183) and considers herself a “freak.”(183) In this scene we find complete mediation between the two communities: Indian and Canadian in Toronto despite those migrant Indians traumatic experiences there is some human touch from the native people.

The story moves to Dunmanus Bay, Ireland, the site of the crash. Kusum and Shaila are wading in the warm waters and recalling the lives of their loved ones, imagining they will be found alive. Kusum has not eaten for four days and Shaila wishes she had also died here along with her husband and sons. They are joined by Dr. Ranganathan from Montreal, another who has lost his family, and he cheers them with thoughts of unknown islets within swimming distance. Dr. Ranganathan utters a central line of the story: “It’s a parent’s duty to hope.”(195) He scatters pink rose petals on the water, explaining that his wife used to demand pink roses every Friday. He offers Shaila some roses, but Shaila has her own gifts to float — Mithun’s half finished model B-52, Vinod’s pocket calculator, and a poem for Vikram, which belatedly articulates her love for him. This is complete trauma of diasporas when there is some accident no one except their blood relatives is there.

Shaila is struck by the compassionate behavior of the Irish and compares them to the residents of Toronto, unable to image Torontonians behaving this openheartedly. Kusum has identified her husband. Looking through picture after picture, Shaila does not find a match for anyone she knows. A nun “assigned to console”

Shaila reminds her that faces will have altered, bloated by the water and with facial bones broken from the impact. She is instructed to “try to adjust [her] memories.”

Shaila leaves Ireland without any bodies, but Kusum takes her husband’s coffin through customs. A customs bureaucrat detains them under suspicion of smuggling contraband in the coffin. In her first public expression of emotion, Shaila explodes and calls him “you bastard.”(189) She contemplates the change in herself that this trauma has wrought:

Once upon a time we were well-brought-up women; we were dutiful wives who kept our heads veiled, our voices shy and sweet. In India, I become, once again, an only child of rich, ailing parents. Old friends of the family come to pay their respects. Some are Sikh, and inwardly, involuntarily, I cringe. My parents are progressive; they do not blame communities for a few individuals. (189)

In the line furthering the experience of trauma, she has also expressed something of the mixed Indian feeling and also the flavor of new land.

From Ireland, many of the Indian Canadians, including Shaila, go to India to continue mourning. Shaila describes her parents as wealthy and “progressive.” They do not mind Sikh friends dropping by with condolences, though Shaila cannot help but bristle. Her grandmother, on the other hand, has been a prisoner of tradition and its gender expectations for most of her life. She was widowed at age sixteen and has since lived a life of ascetic penitence and solitude, believing herself to be a “harbinger of bad luck.”(189) Shaila’s mother calls this kind of behavior “mindless mortification.”(189) While other middle-aged widows and widowers are being

matched with new spouses, Shaila is relieved to be left alone, even if it is because her grandmother's history designates her as "unlucky."(190).

Shaila travels with her family until she is numb from the blandness of diversion. In a deserted Himalayan temple, Shaila has a vision of her husband. He tells her: "You must finish alone what we started together." Knowing that her mother is a practical woman with "no patience with ghosts, prophetic dreams, holy men, and cults,"(191) Shaila tells her nothing of the vision but is spurred to return to Canada. This is nothing other than the painful experiences of the people in a foreign land feeling completely desolate and helpless.

Kusum has sold her house and moved into an ashram, or retreat, in Hardwar. Shaila considers this "running away,"(191) but Kusum says it is "pursuing inner peace."(191) Shaila keeps in touch with Dr. Ranganathan, who has moved to Montreal and has not remarried. They share a melancholy bond but are comforted to have found new "relatives" in each other.

At this point, Judith has done thorough and ambitious work observing, assessing, charting and analyzing the grief of the Indian Canadians. She matter-of-factly reports to Shaila that the community is stuck somewhere between the second and third stage of mourning, "depressed acceptance,"(192) according to the grief management textbooks. In reaction to Judith's self-congratulatory chatter, Shaila can only manage the weak and ironic praise that Judith has "done impressive work." Judith asks Shaila to accompany her on a visit to a particularly "stubborn" and "ignorant" elderly couple, recent immigrants whose sons died in the crash. Shaila is reluctant because the couple is Sikh and she is Hindu, but Judith insists that their "Indian-ness" is mutual enough.

At the apartment complex, Shaila is struck by the “Indian-ness”(193) of the ghetto neighborhood; women wait for buses in saris as if they had never left Bombay. The elderly couples are diffident at first but open up when Shaila reveals that she has also lost her family. Shaila explains that if they sign the documents, the government will give them money, including air-fare to Ireland to identify the bodies. The husband emphasizes that “God will provide, not the government”(194) and the wife insists that her boys will return. Judith presses Shaila:”Have you convinced them?”(194) but Shaila merely thanks the couple for the tea. In the car Judith complains about working with the Indian immigrants, calling the next woman “a real mess.”(195) Shaila asks to be let out of the car, leaving Judith and her sterile, textbook approach to grief management. In this context we find flavor of blended culture in the ways of character.

The story ends with Shaila living a quiet and joyless life in Toronto. She has sold her and Vikram’s large house and lives in a small apartment. Kusum has written to say that she has seen her daughter’s reincarnation in a Himalayan village; Dr. Ranganathan has moved to Texas and calls once a week. Walking home from an errand, Shaila hears “the voices of [her] family.” They say: “Your time has come, . . . Go, be brave.”(197) Shaila drops the package she is carrying on a nearby park bench, symbolizing her venture into a new life and her break with an unproductive attachment to her husband and sons’ spirits. She comments on her imminent future: “I do not know where this voyage I have begun will end. I don’t know which direction I will take. I dropped the package on a park bench and started walking.” (197)

The story, however, is more than a series of portraits. Mukherjee skillfully builds *The Management of Grief* on a series of contrasts and unbridgeable gaps. Through the protagonist Shaila Bhave, a member of the Toronto Indian community who loses her husband and her two sons in the crash, the reader stands poised between contradictions, balanced between two worlds.

Early in the story, Shaila reports on the scene in her house as members of the Indian community gather to receive news about the tragedy that has overtaken them. She tells the reader:

Two radios are going in the dining room. They are tuned to different stations. Someone must have brought the radios down from my boy's bedroom, . I haven't gone into their rooms since Kusum came running across the front lawn in her bathrobe. She looked so funny, I was laughing when I opened the door. (180).

This very early image helps to establish a sense of duality. Each radio reports the same event, but in different words. A listener would have to choose to listen to one radio or the other to make sense of the story being reported. The two radios together, their words out of synch with each other, produce meaningless noise. Shaila, numbed and distant from the event itself, finds herself unable to make sense of the tragedy. Instead, she seems to be trapped between the two radios, trapped between worlds. Here the character is found to be caught between the two complex cultures where there is no concrete identity.

Initially, it appears that the two worlds are India and Canada. Kusum's daughters Pam and her sister highlight the gap between the two. Pam, the older sister, decides to stay in Canada for the summer, choosing to work at Wonderland (a

Canadian amusement park) rather than visit her grandparents in Bombay. Pam “dates Canadian boys and hangs out at the mall, shopping for tight sweaters.”(181) Her younger sister, on the other hand, chooses traditional Indian values and boards the ill-fated flight to Bombay with her father.

Likewise, Mukherjee emphasizes the contrast between Indian and Canadian culture through the introduction of the character Judith Templeton, the government social worker sent to help the Indians “manage” their grief. Templeton tries to recruit Shaila to help her with this task, placing Shaila in the middle between the government and her fellow immigrants. Mukherjee’s portrayal of Judith Templeton slices to the heart of her own discontent with the Canadian’s government failure to understand Indian culture. As Alam argues, “Judith is basically well-meaning but ultimately ill-equipped to ‘manage’ the grief of the Indo-Canadian community because of the cultural distance separating her from them.” By failing to recognize that Shaila’s outward calm is a signal of internal upheaval, Judith reveals her own lack of understanding of the people she is trying to help. Her mistaken assumption that Shaila is managing well places Shaila in an impossible situation. Like the two radios, Indian and Canadian cultural assumptions play in Shaila’s ears until she is unable to make sense of her own grief or her role in the healing process.

Another important dichotomy in the story is that between the genders. The men and the women handle their grief differently, with the women wishing that they could commit suicide and the men trying to provide explanations for the tragedy. In India, during the months following the crash, the men who have lost their wives find that their living relatives quickly line up new families for them:

Already the widowers among us are being shown new bride candidates. They cannot resist the call of custom, the authority of their parents and older brothers. They must marry; it is the duty of a man to look after a wife. The new wives will be young widows with children, destitute but of good family. (190)

However, the women's families do not try to arrange marriages for them. As Shaila reports, "No one here thinks of arranging a husband for an unlucky widow." (190)

Mukherjee also suggests that there are two radically different ways to respond to grief: a return to life, or a retirement from life. Dr. Ranganathan, an engineer who has resisted his relatives' efforts to remarry him, represents the gradual, active return to life. At first, this return to life manifests itself by a change in jobs, although he is still unable to change his home. Eventually, he not only changes jobs and homes; he changes careers, and moves from Montreal to Texas to start life in a place "where no one knows his story." (196) Shaila's neighbor Kusum, on the other hand, represents the other response to grief. She leaves Toronto and moves to an ashram, or retreat, in India. She relies on a swami for advice and counsel. Through her retreat from the world, Kusum finds serenity. She is in contact with her dead husband and believes that she hears her daughter singing while on a pilgrimage. Again, Mukherjee places Shaila in the middle of these two extreme positions. Shaila returns to Toronto, determined to do as the spirit of her husband has instructed her: "You must finish alone what we started together." (190) Although she actively attempts to return to life by writing letters to "the editors of local papers and to members of Parliament" so that they will acknowledge that the crash was an act of terrorism, at the same time, she

retreats from active life, shunning Judith Templeton and living alone with the memories of the dead.

Of course, the greatest division of all in the story is the unbridgeable gap between the living and the dead. Throughout the story, Mukherjee contrasts the living with the dead. In the second paragraph of the story, Mukherjee introduces Dr. Sharma's wife, "monstrously pregnant," (179) who is the mother of four boys. One of the boys walks through the scene at this moment and Shaila recognizes him by his "domed and dented forehead." Such reference reminds readers that Shaila's boys, too, must have literally "dented foreheads," the result of the trauma of the crash. Further, the picture Shaila keeps in her mind of her boys and her husband, as they were alive, prevents her from identifying their bodies when presented with the bloated corpses of several victims. Readers are unable to determine if the corpses truly are Shaila's sons. Does her need to think of them as living prevent her from recognizing their corpses, or are these not her sons at all, as she asserts?

Shaila again finds herself suspended between two worlds, the world of the living and the world of the dead, not knowing how to join either fully. She says:

The zamindar's daughter kept stubborn faith in Vedic rituals; my parents rebelled. I am trapped between two modes of knowledge. At thirty-six, I am too old to start over and too young to give up. Like my husband's spirit, I flutter between worlds. (189)

While Kusum learns to live with her grief by identifying with the dead, and Dr. Ranganathan by identifying with the living, Shaila tells the reader, "I wait, I listen, and I pray, but Vikram has not returned to me. The voices and the shapes and the nights filled with visions ended abruptly several weeks ago."(196)This suggests that

Shaila has been occupying the land of the living during the day while seeking the land of the dead at night. Even her downtown apartment locates Shaila in the middle, “equidistant from the Ontario Houses of Parliament and the University of Toronto.” (197). As the story closes, Shaila reports, “I heard the voices of my family one last time. *Your time has come*, they said. *Go, be brave*”(197)

Shaila’s response is to begin walking. Although the ending is inconclusive because neither Shaila nor the reader knows where she is heading, it is at least a sign that she is moving from the middle. The closing words of the story are also the closing words of the collection: “I do not know which direction I will take. I dropped the package on a park bench and started walking”(197). These words leave the reader with a sense of movement, a sense that Shaila no longer stands motionless and trapped between worlds, but rather walks toward her unknown future.

Shaila, on the other hand, ultimately rejects such oppressive paralysis/Indian-ness, though it is a slow and painful process. Like Kusum, she returns to India to receive the succor of her “homeland.” Her parents do not want her to follow the fate of her grandmother, but they are happy to have her stay in India to be coddled by their affection and luxuries. But Shaila recognizes that succumbing to such a lifestyle, however seductive, is neither recovery nor progress. She asks a vision of her husband: “*Shall I stay!*” He replies: “*What are you doing here? . . . You must finish alone what we started together*” (190) .

They have the sense of identity erosion. They are migrants especially from the already colonized non -western terrain. Due to the milieu of identity crisis in the alien culture, they have the difficulty of balancing their dual reality that causes them on dilemma in the process of living a beautiful existence. It is known that an individual's

identity is related to different factors like social, cultural, religious, economical and spiritual. As the individual leaves his geographical location, he/she is situated between two cultures- one his native and another new culture. Here it is necessary to know that human psyche is shaped by cultural identity. So, in the context of those migrant characters, Mukherjee, sharing her own experience of diasporic living has been successful in depicting predicaments of the migrants regarding the full sense of identity. Identity is a psychic factor where an individual of an identity encounter alien identity, he/she has the diasporic reality in confessing post colonial flux, uncertainly and constant erosion of identities. Interestingly, Mukherjee acknowledges that it is painful for the migrants to put down his/her psychic roots that establish one's identity.

There are altogether 11 short stories in this anthology 'The Middle Man and Other Stories'. All of 11 stories tell about the post colonial trauma. Among the stories, *The Middle Man*, *A Wife's Story*, *The Tenant*, *Jasmine* and *The Management of Grief* have been chosen to draw the contextual issue for the raised issue.

In the collection *The Middleman and Other Stories*, Mukherjee expands her narrative voice to explore not only the lives of immigrants but also those of European Americans who have been brought into contact with cultures about which they have little knowledge. The characters in *Middleman* learn that it is an opportunity as well as a curse to have to remake their lives and their personal identities, but they see also that they can play an active part in the new culture that is slowly coming to accept them. The hopeful and often celebratory tone of these stories represents a marked development in the themes of Mukherjee's immigrant tales. This characteristic in the characters show that they, even if get frustrated at first finally get mediated themselves with the unfamiliar environment.

Some of the characters privileged upbringing in India made them unable to understand the plight of impoverished immigrants; but we have enough grounds to claim that the stories should be applauded for including varieties of characters from non-western nations like Caribbean, Vietnamese, Filipino, and other minority voices from diverse social backgrounds to represent the diverse social backgrounds so that everything could be clear about the pain all groups in western nations. Several stories are narrated by European Americans who are forced for the first time to adjust their own lives and traditions because of relationships they form with foreigners. In all these stories Mukherjee displays a keen ear for American vernacular and presents subtle and often humorous descriptions of cultural barriers and misunderstandings. The cultural misunderstanding and complexities the characters come across represent the pain non-western people experience in the western land to adapt themselves. All the readers find optimistic tone in the collection about the sense of hope that make the stories of *The Middleman and Other Stories* distinct from those in other collections of Mukherjee, and these new stories have been called a “literary bridge of understanding” between North Americans and its newest Asian immigrants. Mostly we find the troubles and pains encountered by the Asian and other migrants in America and other nation as underprivileged civilians.

The stories in *The Middleman and Other Stories* explore the meeting of East and West through immigrant experiences in the U.S. and Canada along with further describing the idea of the great melting pot of culture in the United States. All the stories taken for analysis in this dissertation have similar trends of amalgamating eastern and western culture with a severe experience of diasporic pain. The collection, through the different characters in different context, represents the mediating agent for

the root and targeted culture. The characters become a valuable middlemen linking disparate worlds. The writer, even though, tells her tales from many perspectives, with a keen eye for the concept of self within a larger society. She wrote this collection in a lighter, more celebratory tone, with characters who are adventurers and explorers, rather than refugees and outcasts, and are a part of a new, changing situation. This type of situation is the way how the writer makes possible to mediate between the two cultures with ease at last.

It is a collection of stories of dislocation and relocation as the characters in most of the stories continually shed lives to move into other roles, moving further westward while constantly fleeing pieces of their past. To cite as an example in the story *Jasmine*, Mukherjee rejoices in the idea of assimilation and makes it clear that Jasmine, the title character, needs to travel to America to make something significant of her life, because in the third world she faced only despair and loss. What Mukherjee hoped that people would read in the story is not only Jasmine's story and change, but also the story of a changing America.

IV. Conclusion

The five stories taken for analysis from the collection *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1989) are full of traumatic experiences of the major characters and they are found to be adjustable at any cost there as is no alternative for them. They continuously caught between the traumas of migrants and went on compromising the things that came across in their stay in foreign land. The representative stories taken for analysis are *A Wife's Story*, *The Middle Man*, *The Tenant*, *Jasmine* and *The Management of Grief*.

All these stories carry on the theme of pain among the characters, both native and the migrants. All the major characters are migrated to some foreign land from their motherland for some purposes like gaining economic status, studies or finding complete prosperity in life. They are never found to be aware of those traumatic experiences to be experienced in migrated land before they left their motherland. But later they realize that it is their lack of determination that made them in sorrows. At the outset they were enthusiastic for gaining prosperous life there but after some period they start facing humiliation and psychologically repressed by the natives. They are, in most of the cases exploited by natives. The characters they undergo extreme painful experiences and finally realize that the life is like this they need to adjust in such situations.

Almost all the characters are found to be experiencing many problems in their life in course of their living in a foreign land. They find difficulties with adjustment with the western friends or with the environment of the place where they lived in. Sometimes the characters even pretended to be happy even if they were not happy from within. This situation is created by them as they were so eager to migrate to the

new land thinking about the prosperous life that was imagined by them when they were in their motherland. Once they have all left the motherland abandoning all of their property they can't come back to their land and reside. For some it is possible to come and reside in their own motherland but they have already got adjusted with the new environment and are accustomed with the system. Although they had many traumas and troublesome experiences they easily adapted and digested that thinking that it is simply the fate of a person living in alien land.

The characters are trapped in the enigma of their groundless dreams, because they are carried away by fantasies where they may not be accepted. These uncertainties, rising out of their ambivalence; harping between their two selves and their dream-selves becomes the fountain of their failure. They fall badly, out and out and are aware of the roots of their failures and falls only when it is too late. These all the situations are caused by the characters' lack of security in a foreign land like that of people killed in air crash.

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