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**LAYERED FEMALE IDENTITIES IN
MRS. DUTTA WRITES A LETTER, MRS. SEN'S AND WINTERSCAPE**

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Abstract: *The paper focuses on the function of letters and letter-writing in three short stories written by Indian American authors. Starting from the assumption that dependant female immigrants find it more difficult to adjust to a new culture, I will discuss the way in which letters mediate the characters' experience of estrangement by performing roles of homeland connectors and markers of definitive ruptures. The core of my analysis is the short story entitled Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In this piece of fiction letters are central mechanisms of character construction. They reflect an old female immigrant's dilemma when confronted with American realities. At the same time, the presence of mental letters signals the ambiguous process of filtering cultural values. Letters in the form of self-confessions reflect the intricate negotiations that take place in the context of cultural encounters. The paper also makes references to Mrs. Sen's by Jhumpa Lahiri and Winterscape by Anita Desai. The aim of the paper is to compare and contrast the role of letters in fiction by Indian American female writers. The theoretical background of the present discussion refers to Indian immigration to North America, women's fiction and immigration, the function of letter-writing in literature by female authors.*