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Diasporic Identity, Hybridity, and Transformation in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

In contemporary literary studies, the concept of diaspora has been a major focus, especially when it comes to identity formation, cultural negotiation, and displacement. *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee serves as a seminal text that depicts a protagonist who constantly reinvents herself, capturing the complexity of the immigrant experience. This review paper examines scholarly works that investigate diasporic identity in the novel with particular emphasis on the interconnected concepts of hybridity and transformation. In order to show how identity is created, dismantled, and rebuilt within migratory situations, the study synthesizes a variety of critical viewpoints, such as postcolonial, feminist, psychological, and existential approaches. The findings show that identity in diaspora is fluid, performative, and influenced by trauma, hybridity, and adaptation. The review also highlights the gendered aspects of migration, showing how women redefine their identities while negotiating power structures. Despite the fact that current research offers insightful information, there are gaps in areas such as intersectionality, narrative techniques, and interdisciplinary analysis. By providing a thorough and critically integrated analysis of identity transition in *Jasmine*, this work advances diaspora studies.

Keywords: Diaspora, Identity, Hybridity, Transformation, Immigration, Feminism, Postcolonialism, Diasporic Literature

1. Introduction

Diaspora literature holds a prominent place in postcolonial studies as it explores questions of identity, belonging, and displacement in an increasingly globalized world. Migration forces people to manoeuvre across several cultural frameworks, upending rigid ideas of identity. Rajalakshmi and Sankar (2022) describe this condition as an identity crisis characterized by tension between cultural preservation and adaptation in diasporic contexts. These conflicts are examined through the constant self-reinvention in various sociocultural contexts in the compelling story of *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee.

The study of diasporic selfhood has gained more importance in today's literary and cultural discourse due to the rise in global migration and transnational identities. *Jasmine* portrays migration as a dynamic process of transformation, in contrast to traditional immigrant narratives that place an emphasis on loss or nostalgia. The diversity of diasporic identities is symbolized through the protagonist's transition from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jase, and Jane. Experiences of violence, displacement, and adaptability have formed this metamorphosis, which is not just exterior but also deeply psychological and existential.

The evolving sense of self that results from displacement and relocation across cultural boundaries is referred to as diasporic identity. Diasporic identity is defined by fluidity, fragmentation, and continuous negotiation between past and present locations, in contrast to essentialist ideas of identity as stable or rooted. The protagonist's mobility across social, cultural, and geographic spheres in *Jasmine* shapes this identity, illustrating the flexibility and instability that come with diasporic existence.

Hybridity is a fundamental concept in postcolonial theory. It outlines how several traditions and identities interact to create new cultural forms. Hybridity is a creative space of negotiation where identities and meanings are continuously reconfigured rather than representing a loss of origin. In the context of *Jasmine*, hybridity is evident in the protagonist's ability to negotiate and integrate multiple cultural frameworks. It challenges inflexible dichotomies of self and other, homeland and hostland.

In diasporic literature, transformation serves as a central narrative and thematic component, especially when it comes to illustrating the process of reconstructing one's identity. It includes both internal and external psychological changes brought on by migration, trauma, and adaptation. The protagonist's repeated reinventions in *Jasmine* demonstrate how identity is an ongoing process influenced by experience, decision-making, and sociocultural factors.

The interrelationship between diasporic identity, hybridity, and transformation as key aspects of the migrant experience is a major focus of this work. Diasporic identity in *Jasmine* is portrayed as constantly changing due to displacement and cross-cultural interactions rather than being static or cohesive. This process is strongly related to hybridity, in which the protagonist lives in a transitional cultural area that allows for negotiation and merging of multiple identities. Because of the protagonist's repeated actions of self-reinvention in reaction to changing sociocultural conditions, transformation becomes both a thematic

and structural principle in the novel. The study places *Jasmine* within larger discussions in diaspora and postcolonial studies by highlighting these three interconnected ideas, emphasizing identity as a dynamic, negotiated, and evolving construct.

The present review paper examines core scholarly studies, bolstered by pertinent theoretical and supplementary sources that discuss *Jasmine* from a number of essential angles. The paper tries to identify prevailing trends, theoretical orientations, and research gaps in the existing body of literature by synthesizing these works. It aims to show that diasporic identity in *Jasmine* is a dynamic process influenced by gender, hybridity, and socio-political contexts.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To critically analyse the representation of diasporic identity in *Jasmine*
- To examine how selfhood is constructed and transformed in the context of migration
- To evaluate feminist interpretations of the novel within existing scholarship
- To explore the dynamics of hybridity and processes of cultural negotiation
- To synthesize and critically engage with key scholarly perspectives on *Jasmine*

3. Methodology

In order to investigate how diasporic identity is portrayed in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, this study adopts a methodical and thematic approach to literature review. To synthesize existing scholarly research and identify the prevailing critical trends, theoretical orientations, and research gap is the primary objective. Along with selected foundational theoretical texts, the review is based on sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers, book chapters, and dissertations published from 2015 to 2026.

Thematic inclusion criteria served as a guide for the selection of studies. Works directly addressing *Jasmine* and its core concerns, including diaspora, gender, identity formation, hybridity, trauma, and cultural negotiation were included. Studies that addressed generic diaspora theory were only taken into account when a substantial contribution to the analysis of the conceptual framework was done.

Thematic analysis was used in the analysis process to find, classify, and synthesize recurrent ideas, arguments, and interpretive patterns. Identity fluidity, gendered identity, hybridity and cultural negotiation, trauma and transformation, assimilation strategies, and psychological- existential dimensions are among the extracted themes. In order to find scholarly convergences and divergences, the study also uses a comparative analytical approach, which strengthens the review's critical depth.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Postcolonial Theory: Hybridity and the Third Space

Postcolonial theory provides the primary analytical framework for this study, especially through the ideas of hybridity, liminality, and the Third Space (Bhaba, 1994; Hall, 1990). These concepts challenge essentialist notions of identity by emphasizing its fluid, social, and constructed nature. In order to comprehend *Jasmine*, Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" is especially pertinent as identity is constantly created through cultural interaction rather than fixed origins. A state of in-betweenness, where new meanings and identities arise via negotiation rather than replacement, is reflected in the protagonist's movement across geographical and cultural barriers. Similarly, Stuart Hall's view of cultural identity as a process of "becoming" supports the notion that identity is historically and culturally constructed and is never fully formed. As a result, *Jasmine* views identity as dynamic and constantly changing due to migration and adaptability.

4.2. Diaspora Theory: Displacement and Belonging

With its emphasis on migration, displacement, and the pursuit of belonging, diaspora theory offers a second major lens for this study (Clifford, 1994; Brah, 1996; Safran, 1991). Discontinuity, fragmentation, and the negotiation between memory and new cultural realities are the characteristics of diasporic identity. El-Sawy (2021) conceptualizes the diasporic subject as a "foreign-founder," occupying a liminal space between belonging and displacement. Contemporary scholarship highlights diaspora's constructive potential for identity reconstruction rather than viewing it as a state of loss. The concept of self of the diasporic subject is always changing as a result of the conflict between homeland memory and hostland adaptation. In *Jasmine*, this paradigm explains how identity is reshaped through displacement, where belonging is constantly renegotiated across shifting socio-cultural settings rather than being fixed.

4.3. Feminist Theory: Gendered Identity and Agency

Feminist theory is crucial to this research as it emphasizes the gendered aspects of diasporic experience. This paradigm examines how patriarchal norms shape and constrain female identity by drawing on Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Bell Hooks (1984), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988). The conflict between oppression and agency is highlighted by feminist scholarship, especially in situations where women negotiate both cultural tradition and migratory displacement. As a result of migration, gender roles are both upheld and challenged in *Jasmine*. In spite of structural inequalities, the protagonist's evolving subjectivity shows how diasporic spaces can enable reconfiguration of female agency, reflecting a shift from imposed identity toward self-definition.

4.4. Psychological Perspective: Trauma and Identity Formation

The internal processes of identity disruption and reconstruction are understood through the lens of psychological theory. Identity is seen as a process formed by both experience and psychological adaptation, drawing on Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development and trauma studies by Caruth (1996) and Herman (1992). In *Jasmine*, traumatic experiences of violence, loss, and displacement serve as disruptions that shatter prior identities. But these disruptions also serve as catalysts for psychological resilience and self-reconstruction. Thus, identity is viewed as a dynamic process of adaptation that is shaped by both external and internal processes.

4.5. Existential Perspective: Choice and Self-Creation

Existential philosophy, drawing on Sartre (1943) and Camus (1942) further enriches the analysis by highlighting freedom, choice, and self-determination. According to this viewpoint, identity is actively formed through personal choices and life experiences rather than being inherited. In *Jasmine*, the protagonist's numerous identity changes can be interpreted as acts of self-making, where meaning is continuously negotiated with circumstances. This is consistent with the existential theory that holds that human identity is shaped through an ongoing process rather than being defined by a fixed essence.

4.6. Integrated Theoretical Synthesis

In *Jasmine*, these frameworks collectively offer a multifaceted perspective of diasporic identity. Postcolonial and diaspora theories constitute the basic analytical structure by addressing cultural hybridity, displacement, and belonging. Feminist theory stresses the gendered dimension of identity formation whereas psychological and existential perspectives function as supplementary lenses that enhance the comprehension of agency and internal change. Overall, they illustrate that identity in *Jasmine* is not set or distinct, but a continuously developing construct shaped by cultural negotiation, gender dynamics, psychological experience, and existential choice.

5. Thematic Analysis of Reviewed Literature

5.1. Identity Fluidity and Transformation

The idea that identity is fluid, evolving, and performative is a recurring element across the reviewed studies. Scholars such as Borgohain (2023), Stefanovici and Chilut (2019), and Adhikari (2025) argue that the protagonist's changing identities show flexibility rather than fragmentation. Fixed ideas of selfhood are disrupted by migration, allowing for ongoing reconstruction in response to changing socio-cultural contexts. In *Jasmine*, identity is viewed as a dynamic process shaped by history, culture, and experience rather than a stable essence, drawing on Stuart Hall's (1990) concept of identity as "becoming."

While Borgohain (2023) and Adhikari (2025) understand identity fluidity as a type of adaptability and resilience, Stefanovici and Chilut (2019) consider it as suggestive of fragmentation and instability. A wider critical gap between celebratory and problematizing readings of diasporic identity is revealed by this disparity. However, the majority of these research have a tendency to generalize identity transformation without adequately analyzing the narrative techniques used to create such fluidity.

5.2. Hybridity and Cultural Negotiation

Cultural hybridity and negotiation within diasporic space is another important issue. According to studies like Borgohain (2023), Bundela and Saxena (2023), and Prakash (2023), the protagonist lives in a “Third Space” (Bhabha, 1994) where cultural barriers collide and new identities are formed. The protagonist negotiates between multiple cultural frameworks rather than fully assimilating or rejecting the homeland. In transnational contexts, this hybridity is seen as a creative and adaptive identity building technique rather than a loss of authenticity.

While some scholars such as Bundela and Saxena (2023) and Prakash (2023), highlight hybridity as a creative and liberating environment, other interpretations contend that hybridity may also result in ambiguity and cultural dislocation. This suggests a conflict between seeing hybridity as a source of freedom and as a place of uncertainty. Additionally, existing studies often focus on theoretical abstraction while paying little attention to the linguistic and narrative representation of hybridity in the text.

5.3. Gendered Diaspora and Female Agency

Feminist interpretations emphasize how migration and gender interact to shape identity. Scholars like Saha (2018), Parveen and Khadija (2021), and Fadla and Awad (2018) concentrate on how patriarchal systems function in both homeland and hostland settings. Studies highlight the protagonist’s gradual transition from objectification to agency, drawing on feminist theorists like Spivak (1988), Hooks (1984), and Mohanty (1988). Female subjectivity is renegotiated through resistance, adaptation, and self-definition in migration, which turns into a place of both constraint and empowerment.

Feminist critics generally concur that the protagonist is moving toward agency, although there are disputes in how complete or constrained this agency is perceived to be. For example, while some studies praise her independence, others argue that patriarchal systems still influence her decisions. These studies’ propensity to focus solely on gender while ignoring intersectional elements like class, race, and immigration status is one of their limitations.

5.4. Trauma, Displacement, and Psychological Transformation

Numerous research look at trauma as a major factor influencing diasporic identity (Rajini, 2015; Balaji & Thenmozhi, 2023; Sathaiah & Premkumar, 2021). Violence, loss, and displacement serve as pivotal moments that disrupt pre-existing identities and allow for self-reconstruction. Identity is viewed as a

process of psychological adaptation based on trauma theory (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1992) and psychological frameworks (Erikson, 1950). Instead of being purely harmful, trauma can spur resilience and change.

While most scholars concur that trauma has a transforming effect, they disagree on whether trauma predominantly results in psychological fragmentation or empowerment. Some studies focus on resilience, while others draw attention to persistent instability in the creation of identities. Moreover, many studies consider trauma as a thematic element without completely integrating psychological theory into textual analysis.

5.5. Assimilation, Survival, and Strategic Adaptation

Assimilation is commonly understood as a situational and strategic process instead of passive absorption. The protagonist assumes several identities as adaptive survival tactics in response to changing socio cultural demands, according to studies like Adhikari (2025), Bundela and Saxena (2025), and Sharma (2022). This viewpoint is consistent with Bhabha's (1994) notion of negotiation inside the Third Space and Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as a dynamic and evolving process. Identity thus emerges as malleable, context-dependent, and formed by necessity as well as agency.

Some studies imply that assimilation may also entail a loss of cultural rootedness, despite the fact that the majority of academics view it as a strategic and agentic process. The ongoing argument between assimilation as empowerment and assimilation as erasure is reflected in this discrepancy. Also, the systemic power dynamics that determine the necessity of such adaptive methods is often overlooked in these studies.

5.6. Existential Dimensions of Selfhood

Existential aspects of identity creation are examined in a lesser number of research (Dash, 2022; Malkawi, 2022; Kumara Swami, 2026). These studies, which draw from Sartre (1943) and Camus (1942), emphasize autonomy, choice, and responsibility in self-construction. According to this viewpoint, the protagonist's changing identities are a reflection of an ongoing process of self-formation, in which meaning is produced through lived experience and personal choice.

Even though existential readings place a strong emphasis on personal autonomy and self-creation, they can underplay the socio-cultural constraints that influence the decisions of the protagonist. This leads to a conflict between acknowledging the constraints imposed by external conditions and considering identity as wholly self-determined. Furthermore, in the larger body of scholarship, existential interpretations are still comparatively underdeveloped.

6. Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed research shows that diasporic identity in *Jasmine* is intrinsically fluid, dynamic, and multi-layered rather than fixed or singular. Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane- the protagonist's shifting identities- reflect a continuous process of self- reconstruction influenced by shifting social, psychological, and cultural contexts. Khedkar and Patnaik (2024) interpret this process as an expression of dual consciousness, where the diasporic individual negotiates between past identity and present selfhood. This diversity implies that identity in a diasporic setting is a constant performance negotiated over time and space rather than a fixed essence.

The concept of transformation, which serves as a key mechanism in the diasporic experience, is closely related to this fluidity. In *Jasmine*, transformation is a constant process of self-reinvention influenced by displacement, trauma, and shifting sociocultural circumstances rather than a one-time event. The protagonist's adoption of new identities reflects the dynamic and ever-changing nature of diasporic identity by signifying both adaptation and a reconfiguration of selfhood.

A key finding is, the constant negotiation between cultures. Jasmine does not simply replace her native identity with an American one; instead, she navigates a complex in-between space where parts of both cultures intersect. The hybridity of diasporic life, where assimilation and cultural retention coexist in conflict, is highlighted by this negotiation. As the protagonist negotiates and reconstructs her identity within this transitional cultural space, hybridity also facilitates transformation. Her transformations are fractured rather than linear. This reflects the reality of adaptation and relocation in a worldwide society.

The analysis also shows a substantial interaction between empowerment and marginalization. On one hand, Jasmine's migration offers her chances for self-actualization, independence, and reinvention. On the other hand, she is vulnerable to racial, cultural, and gender-based marginalization. This contradiction emphasizes the paradox of diaspora: it is both confining and liberating. She can break free from restrictive traditions in the new setting, but it also exposes her to new kinds of inequality and exclusion.

Diasporic identity is shaped in large part by gender and patriarchy. Patriarchal systems in both her homeland and the host country have a significant impact on Jasmine's journey. She may, however, progressively question and renegotiate these constraints. Her changing sense of agency shows how diasporic environments can facilitate resistance against conventional gender roles. It also perpetuates specific power systems that reflects a shift from submission to self-determination.

The function that trauma and violence play as catalysts for change is another important aspect. In addition to being destructive, experiences like loss, displacement, and sexual violence also have a transformational effect on Jasmine's identity. She is forced to give up her old identities and adopt new ones, in order to survive these situations. Trauma, thus becomes a pivotal moment that speeds up her psychological and cultural adaptation. It highlights the complex connection between pain and development in diasporic

narratives. This illustrates the intricate relationship between agency and survival in diasporic environments, as transformation is frequently imposed by circumstances rather than being purely chosen.

Additionally, the findings highlight that migration is a multi-layered process of identity reconstruction. Jasmine's journey demonstrates how diasporic people actively negotiate memory, belonging, and aspiration to create new kinds of selfhood. Her ultimate congruence with the principles of the "American Dream" implies that identity need not be based just in origin or tradition.

Overall, the examined research emphasizes that diasporic identity, hybridity, and transformation are not discrete ideas but rather intricately linked. Through hybrid cultural interactions, identity is continuously reshaped. Transformation acts as the process of realizing these changes. This interconnectedness emphasizes that in order to completely comprehend the complexity of diasporic subjectivity, all dimensions must be examined collectively.

In conclusion, the reviewed studies indicate that it is better to think about diasporic identity in *Jasmine* as a process rather than a product. Continuous adaptation, cultural negotiation, and individual agency shape it. The protagonist's development is representative of the larger diasporic situation, in which identity is continually redefined in reaction to difficulties, opportunities, and changing circumstances. This supports the notion that diaspora is about diasporic identity, hybridity, and transformation, emphasizing resilience and the ongoing creation of meaning in unfamiliar spaces rather than just displacement.

7. Research Gap

Despite the depth of previous research, the analysis points out a number of crucial gaps that prevent a thorough understanding of diasporic identity in *Jasmine*:

- Insufficient comparative studies with other diaspora texts
- The intersectionality of gender, class, and race is not given enough attention
- Insufficient analysis of language and narrative strategies
- Minimal interdisciplinary interaction
- Overemphasis on identity, with less attention to power structures and discourse

By providing a comprehensive, thematically organized, and conceptually integrated synthesis of previous researches on *Jasmine*, the current work fills in these gaps.

8. Conclusion

This review paper demonstrates that *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee provides a sophisticated examination of diasporic identity as a process of transformation, negotiation, and self-realization. Together, the analysed studies emphasize the relevance of gender, trauma, and cultural interaction, as well as the fluid and hybrid nature of identity in migrating circumstances. This paper offers a comprehensive understanding

of the critical discourse surrounding *Jasmine* by combining a lot of scholarly works. Simultaneously, it identifies important areas for future research, especially concerning intersectionality and interdisciplinary approaches. The novel remains a vital text for analysing the intricacies of diaspora in contemporary literature. Ultimately, *Jasmine* questions traditional notions of identity by portraying it as a continuous, negotiated, and context- dependent process in addition to reflecting the complexity of diasporic existence.

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