

## **Cultural Identity Transaction in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels: A Study of *Jasmine and Leave it to Me***

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*This study seeks to explore the theme of cultural identity transactions in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, specifically *Jasmine and Leave It to Me*. The novels depict the experiences of immigrants and their struggles with assimilation and self-discovery in a multicultural society. The study examines the protagonist's journeys, challenges, and societal expectations as they navigate their cultural identities. Mukherjee's works highlight the complexities of postcolonialism and the impact of globalization on cultural identity. The study utilizes a qualitative exploratory method to understand the exploration of identity, lifestyle, experiences, and challenges in Mukherjee's novels. Moreover, the novels emphasize the importance of cultural exchange and understanding in promoting empathy and inclusivity in a diverse world.*

**Keywords:** Cultural identity transaction, multicultural society, assimilation, self-discovery, cultural differences

### **Introduction**

Postcolonial literature in the 20th century reflects themes of exile, immigration, and alienation, which have become widespread global issues that cause distress and isolation. It focuses on connecting to one's native nation and addressing identity crisis. It is crucial in

addressing issues like identity crisis, as it studies the effects of colonialism on societies and cultures post-colonial liberation (Parvez & Siddiqui, 2023). The early twentieth century saw a boom in cross-cultural transactions, leading to multiculturalism. In cross-cultural environments, migrants facilitate cultural diffusion, economic integration, and mutual exchange between Western and Eastern cultures. Technological advancements have enabled faster travel, leading to increased collaboration in technology, information, and education, overcoming the limitations of ancient times when Western culture was confined to specific regions. According to George Steiner, “the modernist movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile” (p. 26). Alvin Toffler describes contemporary man as “the new nomad uninterested in putting down roots nowhere” (p.74). Postcolonial Literature explores multicultural experiences in India, highlighting the mismatch between Indian and English languages, emphasizing the importance of English for intellectual exchange between East and West cultures (Iyengar, 1973).

In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, describes culture as the “advanced development of the human powers, development of the body, mind, and spirit by training and experience; all the arts, beliefs, social institutions... characteristics of a community, race, etc.” (210). Anthropologist Hall explains culture not only as a concept but also emphasizes its functions:

culture was not something to simply appreciate or study, but a “critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled”. (ArtReview, 2014)

According to Bakhtin (1986), “the study of culture at the level of system and at the higher level of organic unity: open, becoming, unresolved, and unpredetermined capable of death and renewal, transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries” (p. 135). Culture encompasses various aspects, including language, ideas, beliefs, norms, customs, techniques, artistic pursuits, and rituals, all rooted in unique human capabilities. Prominent literary critics such as Arnold, Trilling, Leavis, and Williams have explained community, caste, and other characteristics (Oxford Dictionary, p. 210), arguing that Literature plays a vital role in transmitting and preserving cultural

values. Raymond Williams, famous for his keen interest in culture, criticizes Eliot's idea of culture for its neglect of "the economic factor" (p. 236). The famous critic has observed that such omission of truth is a significant weakness of his argument. A perceptive critic, Terry Eagleton has clearly and insightfully compared two contenders in the field of culture. His comments throw light on various aspects of culture:

Both Eliot and Williams are concerned with contrasting a common with a uniform culture: both stress the unevenness and variety of any lived common experience. But for Eliot the unevenness springs ironically from a quite rigid structure of levels; all will not experience alike because all will not participate alike. Williams, while agreeing that full participation by one individual in the whole culture will be impassable, locates the essential variety of development in the cultures content, rather than simply in its form; a culture will reveal the unevenness of any process of growth which engages the activity of a great number of men, but it is the variety of what is created, rather than the levels of conscious creation which is seen as primary. (Kumar, 2001, p.286)

Culture is a complex concept with various interpretations, making it difficult to establish a consistent pattern. Immigrants face challenges when cultural differences are significant, such as ethnicity, race, language, and religion. Cultural displacement, or estrangement in geography, culture, language, and psychology, is a significant challenge. Immigrants face challenges in managing cultural differences in contemporary society. Migration has evolved since prehistoric times, often involving the forced migration of individuals from underdeveloped countries who were treated and made to work like slaves. T.S. Eliot's assertion that they only carry a portion of the entire culture in which they were actively involved when residing in their original country (Kumar, p. 64). The postcolonial age has seen extensive cultural amalgamation, which negatively impacts the upper social stratum, especially in India. According to Ashcroft and his colleagues:

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or

reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and peripheral subversion of them. (Ashcroft, 2012)

Morrison (2003) believes incorporating cultural identity into literature allows writers to understand the complex and multifaceted dimensions of diverse cultural backgrounds. This gives readers a deeper understanding of a broad spectrum of human experiences. Literature can use the portrayal of cultural identity to confront and question stereotypes, break down barriers, and create empathy and understanding among readers of different backgrounds. In literature, cultural identity is expressed through multiple means, such as representing traditions, using language, and exploring historical and contemporary social issues of a particular culture. Bakhtin argues “literature is an inseparable part of the totality of culture and cannot be studied outside the total cultural context. It cannot be severed from the rest of the culture and related directly (by-passing culture) to socioeconomic or other factors” (1986, p. 140).

Portrayals enhances the narrative and create an inclusive literary environment, valuing diverse human differences and enriching the narrative. Cultural identity extends beyond the boundaries of the novels of authors from specific cultural backgrounds. Authors from diverse backgrounds can portray and explore cultural identities in their novels, transcending the boundaries of their specific cultural backgrounds and promoting mutual appreciation and interconnection. The concept of identity holds significant importance in literature. According to Stuart Hall, identity is not a fully achieved state but remains incomplete. Hall asserts:

There are atleast two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many others, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves,’ which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common... Cultural identity, in this second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. (Procter, 2004)

Identity is not “the first way of being” (Descombes, p. 35); therefore the notions of identity are not able to entail merely “to be something” or “identical with oneself” (p. 37). Indian authors often engage in the literary creation of novels and short stories, in which they transform psychological and emotional experiences, often influenced by prevailing social and economic conditions. Cultural identity is the psychological and emotional affinity experienced by individuals with a specific cultural or ethnic community. Bakhtin’s definition of cultural identity highlights the significance of interests, indicating that the political dimension is an essential and inherent aspect of cultural events throughout history. It encompasses values, beliefs, traditions, language, customs, and a way of life. Cultural identity shapes characters, themes, and narratives, exploring diverse encounters and perspectives within different cultural groups. Cultural identity is a central theme in multicultural narratives, allowing authors to depict the complexities of human experiences in diverse settings, promoting empathy, inclusivity, and appreciation for the diverse range of human experiences (Hall, 1996).

Bharati Mukherjee’s novels focus on cultural transactions and character development. Indian writers like Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Divakaruni, Kamala Markandaya, and Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri use each character as an Eastern and Western cultural representative. Rushdie’s magical realism elevates his works, showcasing his signature style of hyperactive language and historical imagination. Naipaul’s *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958) portrays India’s entrepreneurial society in *Trinidad*, while *Mignel Street* explores socially diverse street life and expatriate’s struggles to escape reality. Kamala Markandaya explores the pastoral Indian life, peasants, familial ties, monsoons, and destitution in fiction *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954). Ruth Praver Jhabwala critiques the desire for material possessions and spiritual experience among Indians, emphasizing the importance of establishing one’s own culture and avoiding abandoning one’s ideology for another. Both authors emphasize the importance of cultural identity and spiritual growth.

The study will use qualitative exploratory method while analyzing the cultural exchanges of Indian writers to understand their

exploration of identity, lifestyle, experiences, and challenges. This focuses on psychological and emotional factors. The research also considers the social conditions and economic compulsions that enable these transactions, highlighting the significance of identity within the context of globalization. The study explores integration, and cultural identity themes in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, specifically *Jasmine* (1989) and *Leave It to Me* (1997). It examines the protagonists experiences, challenges, and societal expectations in assimilating into a new culture. The study also aims to understand the Mukherjee's portrayal of the immigrant experience and the complexities of postcolonialism.

### **Bharati Mukherjee and her Novels**

Bharati Mukherjee born in India, known for her unique approach to cultural identity exchange. She has gained global critical acclaim in just thirty years, focusing on globalizing changes in society and the development of cultural identities. Mukherjee's protagonists face challenges in cultural assimilation and marginalization (Basu, 2019). She has authored numerous essays, novels, short story collections, and non-fictional works, including *Political Culture and Leadership, Regionalism in the Indian context, Immigrant Writing: Give us your maximalist* (1988), and *Beyond Multiculturalism: Surviving the Nineties* (1996). A variety of comprehensive books, articles, personal interviews, and video presentations have been released on Mukherjee, including Emmanuel S. Nelson's *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspective* (1993) and Fakrul Alam's *Bharati Mukherjee* (1996), which provide valuable resources for scholars specialising in Bharati Mukherjee.

Bhavani Shakuntala's article *Jasmine: An Immigrant Experience* explores Jasmine's journey as an immigrant, highlighting the challenges she faces as she navigates the challenges of being an immigrant. Mukherjee's fiction is a prime example of portraying cross-cultural transaction, as seen in his novels *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Wife* (1975). Itishree Devi's *Negotiating the Gap* analyzes Mukherjee's short stories, focusing on the immigrant protagonists assimilation into a foreign culture and the tensions that arise from adopting and discarding elements from two other cultures. Shobha

Shinde's explores the profound cultural disorientation experienced by Jasmine and Tara, leading to an identity crisis in *Jasmine and The Tiger's Daughter*. S.K. Tikoo's *The American Dream: Immigration and Transformation Theme in The Middle Man and Other Stories* highlights the central theme of immigration and transformation, arguing that the experiences of immigrants challenge superficial relationships and ultimately lead to the realization of the American dream.

Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* explores the themes of migration and integration, encompassing both physical and psychological aspects. Mukherjee's novel portrays the process of Americanization through the fictionalized journey of a young Indian woman. This explores her experiences of both adversity and success as she strives to establish a new sense of self. *Jasmine* exhibits proclivity in which the sensation of being displaced is conquered by a desire to establish roots and discover a new location to call home. Martin Heidegger states, "a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing" (Heidegger, 1971). The yearning for the past is counterbalanced by a longing to seize the present.

Mukherjee herself acknowledged the profound importance of *Jasmine* to her in an interview, stating, "*Jasmine* contains the shape of my life and my desires. But no incident is at all autobiographical" (Mukherjee, p. 47). *Jasmine* initially debuted as a brief narrative and subsequently underwent certain alterations to evolve into a whole novel. In the narrative, she is initially portrayed as a spirited undocumented immigrant from Trinidad who is barely making a living by working as a low-level employee in a run-down hotel in Detroit. Mukherjee's elucidation of her captivation with this character in an interview is noteworthy: "The character would not die. I am intrigued by that particular kind of survival" (Mukherjee, p. 47).

The protagonist (Jasmine) is born eighteen years after the partition. Her family, who had aristocratic ties, relocated from Lahore to Hasnapur. They were required to live the lifestyle of humble peasants. With her family, she has inherited a legacy of exile and movement. Jyoti is regarded as the epitome of beauty and intellect among her family. In patriarchal countries, her life is subjected to

control and domination by her father and brothers. In the novel, Mukherjee states that “Village girls are like cattle, whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (Jasmine, 46), “Jyoti is the fifth daughter, seventh of nine children” (Jasmine, 39). Jyoti’s concerned mother contemplates euthanizing her daughter to spare her from the anguish of a marriage without a dowry and to alleviate her future suffering for a contented existence. Therefore, right from the start, the writer highlights the occurrence of patriarchal violence targeted against women. The political conflicts in the country, including as the Partition Riots and the rebel groups, which have an impact on Jasmine’s family, also portray acts of brutality. Nevertheless, Jyoti marries Prakash, a progressive-minded man from the United States. Prakash motivates Jyoti to pursue the study of English and bestows upon her the name Jasmine. Prakash, at the age of 42, prevents her from becoming a mother at a young age and urges her to study his instructional materials in order to enhance herself and create a brighter future for both of them in America. Jasmine recounts that although she had not yet watched or read the play *Pygmalion* at that time, she now recognises the significant resemblance between her husband and Professor Higgins. He desired to dismantle the traditional lifestyle “I had been living in Hasnapur and transform me into a modern urban woman” (Jasmine, p. 77). Unfortunately, she experiences a tragic event. After the death of her spouse, she goes back to her family. She must choose between adhering to the strict customs of her family and participating in the practice of Sati or continuing to live her life as Jasmine in America. Jasmine embarks on a journey to the United States as an undocumented immigrant, namely to Florida. Her illicit movement commences with her contemplations:

We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners of waiting rooms where surely barely wakened customs guards await their bribe. (Shahi, 2016, p.101)

Thus, she commences her odyssey of metamorphoses, dislocation, and a quest for selfhood. Jasmine’s ability to survive is connected to her strong determination to embrace multiple additional

identities - Jyoti, Jasmine, Jane, and Jase. She resolves to travel to America with the intention of performing Sati, a ritualistic act of self-immolation, by burning herself together with her husband's outfit at the location where he would have attended university.

Jyoti's early life is characterized by two significant events. One event involves a furious astrologer who predicts her future widowhood. While trying to escape from him, she slips and gets a star-shaped gash on her forehead, which she refers to as her "third eye". The second event is about her brave act of killing a dog, which earns her admiration from the women in the town. In the narrative, the protagonist encounters romance through the arrival of Prakash, "whose low gravelly unfooled voice" (66) captivates her, resulting in what she refers to as "love before first sight." (Jasmine, p. 67). Her family members planned her marriage with him in the traditional Indian manner, where the only kind of courtship permitted is securing verbal approval for marriage.

Jasmine persuades her brothers to facilitate her transportation to the United States using a counterfeit passport. Half Face, the deformed sailor who illegally transports her into Florida, is revealed to be a rapist. It is at this moment that she envisions Mother Kali, the fearsome annihilator of wickedness, and proceeds to fatally knife Half Face. She then ignites the chamber and departs. The process of identity shifting commences when she physically attacks Half Face. Assistance is provided promptly by a compassionate Quaker woman, Lillian Gordon, who rescues her from the brink of death due to extreme hunger and exhaustion. Empowered by Lillian's counsel, Jasmine visits Prof. Vadhera with the expectation that his influence in securing Prakash's entrance to the Engineering College would make him seriously consider her proposal to self-immolate.

The revelation that Prof. Vadhera is making a living as a "dealer in human hair" shocks her and leads to her choice of leaving their home and living independently. Unhappy with her impoverished lifestyle, she willingly agrees to become the 'caregiver' for Duff, the small daughter of Wylie and Taylor. This signifies the commencement of her identification as 'Jase,' a period in her life that not only provided her with a sense of belonging to a family but also enhanced her self-

esteem as a 'Wage-earner.' She is deeply moved by Taylor's spontaneity and warmth, including her as a carer. An unexpected encounter with Mrs. Ripplemeyer, who enters her life like a divine being, brings a peculiar twist to her existence, much like Lillian's.

Bud Ripplemeyer, a 50-year-old banker, symbolises the quintessential embodiment of capitalism, akin to the American counterpart of Uncle Scrooge. Iowa serves as the geographical region where the traditional and modern aspects of America converge, making it a central hub for cultural blending. Bud, the epitome of the affluent Caucasian American, ultimately finds himself confined to a wheelchair, married to an Indian woman, and raising an adoptive son named Du, a Vietnamese refugee. Despite being pregnant and having her home rebuilt, Jasmine, who has been given the name Jane by Bud, chooses to leave Bud and their adopted kid. She leaves to the West with Taylor, "greedy with wants and reckless with hope" (Jasmine, p. 241)

Once again, Taylor proposes the idea of embracing the role of a free American individual and invites her to join him on an adventurous journey in California, which is considered the ultimate destination for freedom. Taylor has provided instructions on how to handle undesirable packages, and she confidently puts the word "return" on the parcel using a bold marker pen addressed to Bud Ripplemeyer. Jasmine states, "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the Promise of America and old world dutifulness" (Jasmine, p. 240).

Jasmine possesses exceptional beauty, characterised by innate aristocratic qualities. She is highly intellectual and adept at acquiring the skills necessary for survival. The swift and linear transformation of a village into a metropolis, as well as the transition of Jyoti into Jane, is obscured by the use of nonlinear narrative methods such as montage and jump-cuts, which constantly shift us between different points in time. The novel begins with two images that symbolically encapsulate the story's portrayal of India. The initial image depicts an astrologer positioned beneath a banyan tree in a rural area. The astrologer foretells the unfortunate destiny of seven-year-old Jyoti and proceeds to physically and symbolically mark her forehead with a wound in the shape of a star. The second image depicts a girl vigorously

rowing against destiny in a polluted river, while dragging the putrid remains of a deceased dog. The narrator, Jane Ripplemeyer, asserts that she was originally named Jyoti, which signifies illumination, but she has undergone a personal transformation and now identifies herself as Jane, a resilient individual who perseveres through challenges. Therefore, the resilient nature of Jyoti's spirit is more reminiscent of Jane rather than Jyoti herself.

However, Jyoti, as a component of Jane, is an individual character who surpasses the other peasant women in her ability to take care of herself. Within a hamlet setting, Jane recalls a situation where the women of the village were unexpectedly interrupted during their morning bathroom routine in the fields due to the sudden appearance of a deranged dog. While older women adopt a crouching or crab-crawling position, the girl Jyoti valiantly combats the rabid dog and successfully saves them from harm. As a survivor, Jyoti differs from Indian women who "fell into wells" and "got run over by trains" (Jasmine, 36). She bears a greater resemblance to Jane. When she is not referred to as Jane, Jyoti finds herself devoid of authority in the face of the oppressive feudal system that exists in India. Similarly, the scent of Jasmine is overpowered by the unpleasant odour of the ground.

Therefore, the depiction of her immigrant protagonist, Mukherjee strengthens the characterization of the *Third World Woman* who is limited by her gender and by the underdeveloped culture and economy of the Third World. She possesses a lack of knowledge, adheres to conventional beliefs and practices, and is mostly focused on home matters. She might be seen as someone who is in need of assistance and rescue. Chandra Mohanty has highlighted that the portrayal of the Third World Woman presents "Western women as secular, liberated and having control over their own lives" (*Transnational Feminism – Sociology of Genders*, p. 81).

*Jasmine* written from the third-person perspective. Jasmine from Trinidad, entered Detroit through Canada as an undocumented immigrant. Initially, she resided with her compatriots, the Daboos, who were the proprietors of a motel. Subsequently, she relocated to Ann Arbor and commenced employment as a housekeeper for the Moffitts, namely Bill and Lara, along with their daughter Muffin. She

experienced a sense of joy and satisfaction in realizing that she had developed her own unique identity. While she experienced sentimental nostalgia for her family over Christmas, she had no regrets about leaving Trinidad. She longed for their presence (Jasmine, p. 135). However, while shedding tears beside the Daboos, she pondered, “For what reason?” This is the aspiration she harboured (Jasmine, p. 135). During Lara’s tour with her performing company, Nill successfully enticed Jasmine, and she willingly reciprocated. Upon being referred to as the “Flower of Trinidad,” she promptly responded by asserting that she is, in fact, the “Flower of Ann Arbour” rather than Trinidad (Jasmine, p. 138). While engaging in sexual intercourse on the Turkish carpet, in the presence of the fire, she perceived herself as an attractive and intelligent young woman, lacking a visa, official documents, and a birth certificate. She was an exuberant girl eagerly propelling herself into the future. Jasmine, the exuberant and dynamic immigrant, is now establishing her own nation and immersing herself fully in a fresh chapter of her life. She appeared to be reconstructing her identity from scratch, a profound endeavour of self-creation in her adopted nation. “The experience was extremely pleasurable and fitting, causing her to completely disregard the dullness of her current life and surrender herself to it.”

Mukherjee has embraced her Indian heritage through her notable writings, as she stated in an interview with the *Massachusetts Review*: “The immigrants in my stories undergo extreme transformations of America and simultaneously alter the country’s appearance and psychological make-up.” Mukherjee, faced with various challenges of displacement and confusion, examines her sense of self as a collection of flexible identities. In her novels, she portrays individuals who consistently reshape culture, redefining the current state of affairs and reconceptualizing aspirations for the future (Long, 202). Therefore, the self can be characterized as a fluid entity in constant transformation and evolution, lacking unity and hybridity and perpetually incomplete.

Mukherjee’s *Leave It to Me* reflects the theme of identity in Indo-American duality and personal dilemma (NDR Chandra, p. 2067). Mukherjee’s fictitious world depicts the negative aspects of exile and

immigration, highlighting the alienation, identity crises, cultural shock, and psychological conflict experienced by female protagonists. She excels in enhancing cultural exchange in immigrants' lives, focusing on identity transactions, protagonist's struggle with identity, societal expectations, and gender's role in these transactions.

In *Leave It to Me*, Mukherjee depicts cultural identity transactions in the context of immigration and cultural assimilation in a complex manner. Debby DiMartino, who transforms into Devi, navigates the intersections of her American upbringing and Indian heritage throughout the novel. Debby struggles to reconcile her two identities and the interactions that arise as she attempts to find her place in a multicultural society. Debby's conflict with her cultural identity is the focus of novel. Born to an American mother and an Indian father, she feels displaced and disconnected from her Indian heritage.

As Devi, she attempts to embrace her Indian identity, but her inability to speak the language fluently and her lack of familiarity with the customs create internal conflict. Her journey is an in-depth examination of her efforts to navigate her dual identity and the difficulties of defining herself in the face of competing cultural influences. In India, the Goddess is traditionally depicted with an enormous tongue to symbolize her formidable qualities. In an early glimpse at the novel's worst-case scenario, the goddess's tongue is linked to terror, bloodshed, and vengeance. As if her whole body were a tongue, the narrator sits with her lover's head on her lap and "the ferrous taste of fear" in her mouth (LIM, p. 10). Debby's face here seems to merge with that of the goddess Devi. Devi's first meeting with her biological mother takes place in a Sacramento store, where the young designer has been trying out several drapes for a seven-veil gown. Ham and Devi are engaged in a passionate kiss when Jess Du Pree appears behind a display of caftans and drags him away.

Debby DiMartino, or Debi, is a psychotic adolescent who plans to kill her parents. The plot reveals her ungratefulness toward her loving adoptive parents and her vindictive search for her birth parents, painted as murderers and free-spirited hippies from the 1960s. The narrative also delves into the cultural collision between the East and the West. The protagonist's emotional and political investment in

her quest for revenge provides a lens through which to study the complexities of mother-daughter relationships.

Devi Dee, takes on several guises. She goes through the motions of location, dislocation, and relocation. The narrative follows the protagonist as she tries to find her place in the world and adjust to her new circumstances. This not only serves as a witness to the complexity of the author's life but also delves into the many facets of postcolonial identity, such as crises, geographical relocation, and re-establishment. Mukherjee uses several chaos theory-inspired metaphors and notions in *Leave It to Me* to back up the claim that "destruction is creation's necessary prelude." Chaos is a shared creative force that encourages people to think beyond their limitations. Humans create notions of good and evil, leading to destruction and uncertainty. This disarray can be seen as a catalyst for new growth, with insanity and violence defining anarchy as complementary cleansing processes. Symbols represent an initial stage in the creative process.

Mukherjee's use of mythic realism seems to provide a stable basis for the complex dynamics of postcolonialism in the context of immigration. Mukherjee uses a methodical strategy to break out of prevalent typecasting. It is possible to see Hannah and the other characters as symbols of a specific socioeconomic group. Myth and reality impact Mukherjee's development as a writer and a character and are also seen in her writing style. However, the intensity seems to be fading with time. There is presently less of a fire. Writing in an American manner but retaining her Indian sense of humor, she has become a leading voice and advocate for all immigrants in America.

Debby/Devi's cultural identity is significantly influenced by societal expectations, as she struggles to conform to American norms and views herself as an oddity. This tension shapes cultural identity transactions, and the intersection of gender and cultural identity in both American and Indian contexts gives her character dimension and highlights her quest for self-discovery. *Leave It to Me* is a testament to Mukherjee's in-depth examination of cultural identity, immigration, and assimilation in the contemporary world. The voyage of Debby/Devi is a compelling illustration of the difficulties encountered by individuals attempting to reconcile their diverse cultural contexts. The

novel accurately depicts the impact of societal expectations and the interaction of gender on cultural identity formation. *Leave It to Me* by Mukherjee remains a timeless reflection on the complexities of cultural identity transactions and the intricate fabric of human experiences in a constantly changing world.

### Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee's novels, *Jasmine* and *Leave It to Me*, explore the themes of cultural identity transactions and the challenges faced by immigrants in assimilating into new cultures. The protagonists navigate the complexities of their dual identities, grappling with societal expectations and gender roles. The novels vividly depict the psychological and emotional aspects of cultural displacement and the search for self-discovery. Mukherjee's depiction of the immigrant experience sheds light on the intricate nature of postcolonialism and the impact of globalization on cultural identity. The novels emphasize the significance of cultural exchange and understanding in a multicultural society. Mukherjee's works challenge preconceived notions, dismantle stereotypes, and break down barriers between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, Mukherjee's novels serve as a valuable contribution to academic discourse, enhancing our understanding of the multifaceted nature of human experiences and advocating for empathy and inclusivity.

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