



# A Study of Psychological Sufferings in the Works of Bharati Mukherjee

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**Citation:** Dr. Neha Sharma (2020), A Study of Psychological Sufferings in the Works of Bharati Mukherjee, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 26(1), 339-343

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v26i1.9422

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	<p>Bharati Mukherjee, a notable figure in diasporic literature, vividly captures the depths of emotional and psychological anguish in her works. Mukherjee's works frequently delve into the complexities of cultural clash, displacement, and issues of identity, effectively capturing the intense emotional struggles faced by her characters. This study seeks to analyze specific literary works in order to reveal the emotional turmoil that people go through when they face the challenges that arise from the clash between traditional values and modernity, the struggle between the concepts of home and exile, and the conflict between one's personal identity and societal expectations. The paper delves into the exploration of how Mukherjee's characters embody the challenges associated with psychological well-being, cultural seclusion, and identity problems, reflecting broader concerns.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Bharati Mukherjee, psychological suffering, diasporic literature, identity crisis, cultural alienation, mental health</p>

## 1. Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee is a significant figure in contemporary diasporic literature, known for her empathetic portrayals of immigrants and the challenges they face while adjusting to a new environment. The characters' journeys through the complex paths of self-discovery, searching for a sense of belonging, and personal growth are prevalent motifs in her narratives. The main focus of this study is to analyze the emotional distress that Mukherjee conveyed. This in-depth investigation delves into the ways in which individuals' distinct life events can have a profound impact on their mental and emotional well-being. Bharati Mukherjee explores the profound emotional turmoil in her works, which is a crucial aspect of diasporic literature. The main characters experience a variety of emotions as they face the difficulties of moving to a new country, adapting to different cultures, and discovering their true selves. These events can be quite overwhelming for individuals who struggle with mental health, feel disconnected from their culture, or have concerns about their own identity due to the abstract nature of these experiences. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these characteristics and how Mukherjee incorporates them into her writing, this study will explore the topic in greater detail. [1,2]

## Identity Crisis and Cultural Conflict

As they attempt to balance the expectations of their home nations with those of their new communities, many of Mukherjee's characters battle with profound self-doubt. Many individuals go through profound emotional pain and lose touch with who they are because of this inner struggle. The heroine of "The Tiger's Daughter," Tara, is severely estranged upon her long-awaited return to India. This is far from a joyous reunion; rather, it is a challenging face-off with the profound unease that accompanies a person's separation from their own cultural background. Tara has a significant emotional struggle during her journey as she is pulled between two societies who totally reject her. The novel deftly captures her struggle to reconcile her Indian heritage with her American existence, which elicits deep anguish and bewilderment at its end.

Paralleling Jasmine, this novel's protagonist embarks on a life-altering journey from rural India to America, despite encountering several challenges along the way. The fact that Jasmine is able to go from being Jyoti to becoming Jasmine and then Jane is indicative of her strength as a person and her willingness to accept the identities that her environment shapes. She strives to blend in with a community that views her as an outsider, thus she is always adapting to new places and overcoming cultural hurdles. It is clear that Jasmine's psyche is

suffering from the psychological toll that her identity is continuously changing. Both the loss of her individuality and the adoption of new cultural norms are challenges for her.

### **Displacement and Mental Health**

The theme of relocation, whether intentional or not, runs deep and wide throughout Bharati Mukherjee's writings. Beyond a mere shift of location, this concept of displacement is deeply ingrained in her characters' emotional and psychological skeletons. The mental and emotional toll that moving to a new, unfamiliar environment can have on many individuals is substantial. The main characters in Mukherjee's novels undergo a deep internal displacement as they confront the strange and bewildering new surroundings, in addition to the outside movement across boundaries. In Mukherjee's story *Jasmine*, the protagonist goes through a terrible journey from India to America. A series of terrible incidents taint Jasmine's journey, as they do the diasporic experience overall, and put a lengthy shadow over the possibility of a new beginning. Moving beyond the physical limitations of space and time, the journey introduces a new realm of existence, one that is fraught with peril, loss, and alienation. Unfortunately, Jasmine's quest is cut short when her husband tragically dies, bringing her face-to-face with the brutal realities of her new life. This severe estrangement from her past is emblematic of the larger issue of displacement, which happens when individuals are uprooted from their homeland and thrust into a new environment where they must reconstruct fragments of their past selves in order to forge new identities. The psychological pain Jasmine already suffers from losing her family and the trauma she endures as a consequence of violence is exacerbated by the profound sense of loneliness she encounters in her new home. Now that her family is no longer there, she is emotionally and culturally disconnected and faces an unfamiliar and perhaps hazardous world on her own. Each horrific deed simply makes her feel more exposed and displaced, and the dreadful circumstances of her journey amplify this loss. The cumulative effect of these experiences is a precipitous decline in Jasmine's mental health, which in turn causes her self-esteem to plummet. Mukherjee subtly but compellingly portrays Jasmine's mental agony as she skillfully knits together her inner and outer lives. Through Jasmine's internal monologues and interactions with her surroundings, Mukherjee reveals the deep psychological scars that displacement leaves on her characters. Despair and misery fill Jasmine's mind as she struggles for acceptance and safety in a world that is always judgmental of her. With nowhere to turn and an overwhelming sense of alienation, Jasmine's mental suffering intensifies as she descends farther into despair. The mental anguish of migrating is intensified by the cultural and social conflicts that Jasmine faces in her new community. Cultural standards that conflict with her own, subtle but persistent discrimination, and her unfamiliarity with her surroundings all contribute to her feelings of isolation. Through Jasmine's journey through an alluring but sometimes hostile world, Mukherjee vividly depicts her complex emotions of alienation. The cultural mismatch Jasmine encounters isn't only an external factor; it penetrates her whole being and makes her wonder about her place in the universe. In Mukherjee's broader body of work, the characters' psychological journeys are closely tied to their sense of displacement, which extends beyond the literal act of travel. Along with the journey to a new country comes a profound sense of loss for many of Mukherjee's characters. They lose touch with their heritage, their families, and themselves. This is more than just a nostalgic longing for the past; it's a profound dislocation that makes people question who they are as a whole. The psychological travels of these people are characterized by a continuous process of self-negotiation as they attempt to make sense of their histories and their new environments. The story of *Jasmine* emphasizes the concept of psychological displacement, which is a part of the physical and emotional hardships of migrating. Adapting and recreating herself on a psychological odyssey of survival, Jasmine navigates the intricacy of her new existence. She assimilates into her community's social and cultural standards by going by a variety of names, including Jyoti, Jasmine, and Jane, each of which represents a facet of her identity. The problem with Jasmine's incessant need to reinvent herself is that she never really feels like she has an identity. The psychological effects of this identity movement are substantial, leading to a deep feeling of dislocation and disintegration. Mukherjee explores psychological agony in the context of migration in a personal and universal story. Alluding to both her personal experiences and the broader diasporic reality, Jasmine's story echoes the common thread of displacement that binds the stories of many immigrants. As they struggle with questions of identity, isolation, and survival in dangerous environments, the protagonists and antagonists in Mukherjee's work undergo psychological trials that show how resilient the human spirit can be. Through her nuanced portrayal of migration and its psychological effects, Mukherjee makes a rich commentary on the immigrant experience. Not only does her protagonists have to adapt to a new country, but she also has her characters struggle with finding their own identity and a sense of belonging that transcends geographical boundaries. The psychological cost of uprooting oneself and the ongoing quest to establish one's position in a world that is both unexpected and ever-changing are both shed light on in Mukherjee's work, which provides a perceptive glimpse into mankind[3,4].

### **Gender and Psychological Suffering**

Gender is both a tool and a prism through which Bharati Mukherjee views the complex dynamics at work in the minds of her characters, allowing us to see how cultural conventions and strict gender standards interact. The female characters in Mukherjee's works often endure profound psychological anguish as a result of their fight for social acceptance while still pursuing their own dreams. As the protagonists and antagonists negotiate

the tricky landscape of identity, self-worth, and mental health, the conflict between society expectations and personal wants often leads to profound psychological suffering. This is shown most clearly in Mukherjee's *Wife*, where the heroine Dimple Dasgupta's journey exemplifies the negative effects of sexist norms on psychological well-being. The strict demands of Dimple's conservative upbringing first shape her into the archetypal conventional Indian lady in *Wife*. Conforming to predetermined roles as a wife and daughter-in-law shapes her identity, which is influenced by a culture that highly values marriage as the pinnacle of a woman's purpose. But for Dimple, the deep psychological strain comes from society's idealization of marriage as the last destination of a woman. Having a husband and the responsibilities that come with it has always been central to Dimple's identity, and she places a high importance on meeting those expectations. Wedding season, instead of giving Dimple pleasure, makes her anxious, suggesting a chasm between her dreams and the path society has set out for her.

A disillusioned immigrant in America, Mukherjee deftly depicts Dimple's mental stability deteriorating as she goes from a conventional Indian lady to one. The psychological unraveling that occurs as a result of this transition is just as significant as the physical move; the expectations to adhere to gender conventions clash with the harsh reality of her new existence. The cultural norms that governed her actions in India are still at work in the United States, but the isolation and confusion she felt as an immigrant only made things worse. As Dimple fights for acceptance in a society that seems more and more unfriendly and foreign, she undergoes a process of existential displacement in addition to physical displacement. As Dimple adjusts to life in the United States, she finds it more difficult to balance her own goals with the societal expectations placed upon her. The psychological disintegration she goes through is a direct outcome of this inner struggle, where her dreams are always in war with the strict gender norms that society imposes on women. As a result of this pent-up stress, Dimple has a nervous breakdown when she can no longer cope with the pressures of society's expectations. Society imposes limits on women's identities and duties, often at their expense, and her spiral into lunacy is a reflection of that.

Mukherjee shows a profound sensitivity and authenticity in her depiction of Dimple's mental degeneration. She paints Dimple's insanity not as a random occurrence but as the natural consequence of a lifetime of suppressed oppression. The plight of Dimple is representative of that of women everywhere, who face discrimination because of their gender regardless of their goals or ambitions. Her collapse is a striking example of the mental toll that repressive systems can have on people, especially women who are not allowed to choose their own identities. Being an immigrant causes Dimple to feel even more culturally and socially isolated, which compounds her psychological pain. Neither completely immersed in American society nor able to hold on to her Indian heritage, Dimple occupies a transitional position in America. Her mental instability and feelings of estrangement are worsened by this cultural displacement. In America, she encounters distinct but no less stifling social constraints due to the persistent reminders of her position as an alien. The pressures of a strange culture and the lack of a supporting community further exacerbate Dimple's feelings of hopelessness and despair, driving her farther into madness. The larger implications of gender and psychological pain in the context of the immigrant experience are also explored by Mukherjee in *Wife*. The story emphasizes how immigrant women's psychological suffering may be worsened by the confluence of gender and cultural exile. The narrative of Dimple is about more than simply her own hardship; it is also the story of the many women who, like her, must deal with the challenges of finding their place in a new country. It is common for immigrant women, like Dimple, to feel emotionally and mentally torn between their home culture's norms and the harsh reality of their new country. In addition to highlighting the psychological pain of women, Mukherjee's depiction of Dimple's spiral into madness critiques the social systems that perpetuate gender inequity. Patriarchal rules that limit women's agency and prevent them from discovering who they are have a negative effect, as the book shows. As a symbol of the larger fight for gender equality, Dimple's frustration with society's expectations of women serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of letting one's dreams die in the sake of duty. As Mukherjee elaborates on Dimple's mental journey, she explores the nuances of mental illness in relation to the immigrant experience. Not only does Dimple's psychological breakdown stem from her struggle to adhere to gender conventions, but the tremendous cultural pressures she faces also play a role. She is more mentally unstable as a result of the cultural mismatch, loneliness, and alienation she faces in the United States; this incident emphasizes how immigrant women are particularly vulnerable since they are often left to face these difficulties alone. To better comprehend the mental toll of cultural upheaval and gender inequality, Mukherjee presents a complex and sympathetic portrayal of mental illness in this setting. Finally, by delving into the complex web of gender roles, societal norms, and mental anguish, *Wife* stands. Dimple's mental collapse, as portrayed by Mukherjee, serves as a sobering reminder of the devastating effects of sexist norms and cultural expectations that shape women's identities. Mukherjee provides a scathing analysis of the social systems that uphold gender inequity and mental health via Dimple's narrative, which in turn illuminates these larger concerns. The book expands its criticism by examining these problems through the lens of immigration, drawing attention to the particular struggles endured by women as they attempt to find their place in a new culture while grappling with questions of identity and belonging. Therefore, by providing insightful psychological analysis of gender, mental health, and the immigrant experience, Mukherjee's work significantly contributes to the ongoing conversation on these topics[5,6].

## 2. Psychological Realism in Mukherjee's Narrative Technique

Mukherjee's storytelling is known for its psychological realism, which allows readers to enter the heads of her characters. To show how her characters are feeling emotionally, she uses literary devices like internal monologues and stream of consciousness. By using this method, the reader is able to fully immerse themselves in the story and feel the characters' inner struggles. Using stream of consciousness, Mukherjee portrays the heroine Jasmine's fractured mind as she deals with the intricacies of her identity in *Jasmine*. Disorganized thinking is a symptom of Jasmine's inner turmoil and the emotional toll her experiences have had on her. Similarly, Mukherjee depicts Tara's feelings of isolation and confusion upon her return to India via vivid depictions of her emotions in *The Tiger's Daughter*. Readers are drawn deeper into the characters' inner lives and the emotional struggles they face via the use of psychological realism in these stories[7,8,9].

## 3. Case Studies

To further elucidate the psychological suffering in Bharati Mukherjee's literary works, this section presents an in-depth examination of two pivotal novels: *Jasmine* and *The Tiger's Daughter*. These case studies are instrumental in understanding the specific psychological challenges confronted by the protagonists, the intricate web of cultural and social factors that contribute to their distress, and the broader implications these narratives have for understanding mental health within the framework of diasporic experiences.

Novel	Protagonist	Psychological Challenges	Contributing Cultural and Social Factors	Broader Implications
<i>Jasmine</i>	Jasmine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trauma from loss of family and home</li> <li>- Identity disintegration</li> <li>- Psychological reinvention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uprooting from native land</li> <li>- Violence as both victim and survivor</li> <li>- Alienation in a foreign culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explores trauma and survival mechanisms in a diasporic context</li> <li>- Highlights the psychological impact of violence and displacement  </li> </ul>
<i>The Tiger's Daughter</i>	Tara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identity crisis</li> <li>- Cultural dislocation</li> <li>- Alienation and psychological distress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Return to a changed homeland</li> <li>- Living between two cultures</li> <li>- Inability to reconcile past with present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examines the psychological effects of cultural dislocation</li> <li>- Illustrates the fractured identity resulting from dual cultural existence</li> </ul>

### Jasmine

In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee presents a profound exploration of psychological suffering through the protagonist's experiences of trauma and survival. Jasmine's journey is a harrowing one, marked by successive losses that strip her of her family, home, and ultimately, her sense of self. These cumulative losses drive Jasmine into a state of psychological disintegration, where her identity is fractured by the violent and alienating experiences she endures.

Mukherjee artfully portrays Jasmine's inner turmoil through her interactions with others and the reflective internal monologues that punctuate the narrative. These insights into Jasmine's psyche reveal the coping mechanisms she adopts to navigate her suffering—mechanisms that often involve a reinvention of self as she moves from one identity to another in a bid to survive the relentless challenges of her life. The novel also delves into the role of violence in Jasmine's psychological state, exploring how her experiences as both a victim and a survivor of violence shape her mental and emotional world. This narrative trajectory underscores the enduring impact of trauma and the complex process of psychological reinvention that is necessary for survival in a diasporic context[10].

### The Tiger's Daughter

In *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee shifts focus to the psychological repercussions of cultural dislocation. The protagonist, Tara, returns to India after spending significant time abroad, only to find herself engulfed by feelings of alienation and an acute identity crisis. This return home, rather than offering comfort, exacerbates Tara's psychological distress as she confronts a homeland that is both familiar and foreign. Mukherjee skillfully captures Tara's internal struggles through her interactions with her family and the Indian society she once knew. These interactions highlight the deepening fissures in Tara's sense of self, as she struggles to reconcile the person she has become with the cultural identity she left behind. The psychological suffering Tara endures is emblematic of the broader challenges faced by individuals who live between two cultures, unable to fully belong to either. The novel poignantly

illustrates the fractured identity that results from this dual existence, where the past and present cannot be seamlessly integrated, leading to a profound sense of loss, confusion, and psychological instability [11]. Through these case studies, Mukherjee's works underscore the complex interplay between cultural displacement, gender norms, and psychological suffering. The protagonists' experiences highlight the multifaceted nature of mental health challenges in diasporic contexts, where identity, belonging, and survival are in constant flux. These narratives offer a compelling exploration of how the intersection of personal trauma, cultural dislocation, and rigid societal expectations can lead to profound psychological distress, providing valuable insights into the broader discourse on mental health in a globalized world.

### Conclusion

The study of psychological suffering in Bharati Mukherjee's works reveals the complex interplay between cultural identity, gender, and mental health. Mukherjee's nuanced portrayal of her characters' psychological experiences provides valuable insights into the broader issues of alienation, displacement, and identity crisis in diasporic literature. By foregrounding these themes, Mukherjee's work contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological dimensions of the immigrant experience. Her narratives serve as a powerful reminder of the mental toll that cultural dislocation and identity conflict can have on individuals, particularly those navigating the complexities of life between two worlds. In conclusion, Mukherjee's exploration of psychological suffering in her works not only reflects the experiences of her characters but also offers a broader commentary on the human condition. Her ability to depict the inner lives of her characters with such depth and realism makes her work a significant contribution to the field of diasporic literature. As this study has shown, Mukherjee's portrayal of psychological suffering is a central aspect of her narratives, offering readers a profound understanding of the mental and emotional challenges faced by those living between cultures.

### Discussion

Bharati Mukherjee's literary works intricately explore psychological suffering through themes of displacement, identity crises, and cultural conflicts. Characters like Jasmine and Tara undergo intense emotional struggles, reflecting the mental toll of migration and assimilation. Mukherjee portrays identity as fluid and fragmented, with her characters grappling to reconcile their pasts with present realities, leading to profound psychological distress. Gender roles further complicate their mental states, as seen in Dimple's descent into madness due to oppressive societal expectations. Mukherjee's psychological realism, through internal monologues, allows readers to deeply engage with these universal mental health challenges, highlighting the complexities of diasporic experiences.

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