Journal of Language and Literature
Vol. 26 No. 2, October 2026, pp. 405-414
DOI: 10.24071/joll.v26i2.1234
Available at https://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/JOLL/index

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Ordeals of Immigrants in Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories*

Bimal Kishore Shrivastwa
bimalksrivastav@gmail.com
Department of English, Tribhuvan University, NEPAL

Abstract

The intersection of memory owing to migration, social inequality, emotional suffering, and intergenerational trauma offers a significant area of inquiry within contemporary English literary studies. The research paper endeavours to explore how the leading characters, as well as the immigrants in Bharati Mukherjee's short stories, compiled in her book, The Middleman and Other Stories, suffer from the distress and trauma of displacement. It mainly analyses two short stories from the anthology, namely, "A Wife's Story" and "The Middleman", to note how the immigrants attempt to adapt to the menacing foreign worlds. The research paper takes a textual approach and makes a close reading of the text through the lens of diasporic concepts advocated by post-colonial thinkers, with special reference to the diasporic theorist Robin Cohen. Diaspora, since the 1990s, has been used to describe events of migration that lead to the issues of new identities. The diasporans who endeavour to settle in foreign countries have formed new patterns of life and new communities to get rid of the hybrid identity and culture. The finding is that the central characters of the selected stories, such as Panna Bhatt in "A Wife's Story", and Alfie Judah in "The Middlemen," experience painful awareness in mimicking Western culture and constructing their concrete identity of diasporic dwelling. It is assumed that the paper stands as a reference for the researchers interested in exploring diaspora literature in the future.

Article information

Received: May 31, 2026

Revised: October 22, 2026

Accepted: October 27, 2026

***Keywords**: Bharati Mukherjee; diaspora; hybridity; identity; trauma*

Introduction

Owing to the rapid flow of immigration of Indians and Asians to the Western world in the current era of post-colonialism, diasporic issues have become a crucial discourse in academia and in the social, cultural and post-colonial world. The migration trend has generated complex problems because it affects the undocumented migrants who move to desired countries for greater economic opportunities but never succeed in achieving

their ambitious expectations (Cohen, 2010; Rana, 2022). The diasporic experiences are always painful. Diaspora is taken in relation to the identity politics of one's place of origin and evolving relationship with that of one's present home (Natarajan, 2010). Mukherjee, often recognized for rendering a powerful "voice of expatriate-immigrant sensibility" (Kumar, 2013, p. 14), narrates the challenges of Indians struggling to settle in Western countries (Meer, 1989) because she had already settled in America. The recurrent issues of Mukherjee's novels and short stories are the dilemma of modern men and women living in an alien world and their endeavour to mark their own space (Ali, 2025). The Indian-born American short-story writer, Bharati Mukherjee, is renowned for delineating the cultural changes and experiences of alienation of the immigrants in her writings (Janagarraj, 2026). Alfie Judah in "The Middlemen" and Panna Bhatt in "A Wife's Story" suffer from cultural, social, economic, and racial segregation simply because they are migrants in America.

The ethos of migrants, their hardships, struggles in finding space in their destination countries, and the paradoxical situation between ambition and bitter reality in shaping identity, portrayed by Mukherjee, has been advocated by the proponents of the diaspora and post-colonial critics. The immigrants share the trauma of displacement that becomes the diaspora, diasporic experience, or diasporic identity. Ashcroft et al. (2013) mentioned that diasporic communities are generated by migration that affects the "process of dislocation and regeneration too" (p. 74). Rushdie (1991) asserted the identity of diasporic cultures by locating his factual homeland. He imagines filling the cultural gaps between two situations that also give diasporic identity. Natarajan (2010) related the condition of diaspora to the continuous exchange of history, culture and power. Hall (1990) argued, "in forms of shared culture, a sort of collective one true-self subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power" (p. 112). The diasporic persona seeks to build an evolving relationship ranging from the place of one's origin to the present home.

Before analyzing the texts from the perspectives of diaspora, it is worth noting what reviews of the relevant literature have been made by scholars and critics of Mukherjee with respect to her stories compiled in *The Middleman and Other Stories*, and mark the research gap. Critics have approached Mukherjee's short stories in *The Middleman and Other Stories* from multiple perspectives since its publication in 1988. A group of critics has assessed the characterization of the stories in the compilation. Mukherjee's protagonists are mostly the third-world refugees chasing the dreams that always elude them (Siva, 2019). Her characters are mostly depicted as "displaced and alienated from their land of origin and moving to the USA" (Shrivastwa, 2022, p. 391). Some critics have examined prominent and recurrent themes of Mukherjee's stories. Parameswaran (1990) indicated that social problems of contemporary society are exposed in her stories. Mukherjee displays how energetically Eastern men and women plan to move to the Western world in quest of security, freedom from the bondages of traditional societies, and opportunities (Maxey, 2019). Some critics have noticed how Asians take glory in the adventures of leaving their native country and landing in new countries. "A Wife's Story" by Mukherjee depicts the joy of Asians at the opportunities to explore American culture (Parameswaran, 1990). Mukherjee powerfully captures the instincts and psychic anxiety of the characters in her novels and stories (Sharma, 2020). Her stories often portray the intricacies of the cultural tension, alienation, and settlement of the Indian people living in foreign countries (Gonzalez & Oliva, 2015). Another group of critics has paid special attention to the narrative technique of Mukherjee. The stories of Mukherjee juxtapose narrative with the dramatic actions of the characters (Ali, 2025; Sharma, 2020). The brilliant narrative skill of Mukherjee draws readers to complete reading her stories in one sitting and grasp the intended message.

Though critics have noticed the issues of shifting borders, they have not paid full attention to the diasporic sufferings of the immigrants. Here lies the research gap. Hence, this research paper seeks to address the gap. The significance of the research lies in understanding the challenges of migrants and

Journal of Language and Literature
ISSN: 1410-5691 (print); 2580-5878 (online)

addressing their pressing issues in foreign countries. The research work provides guidelines for the people who aspire to go abroad in search of career and prosperity by indicating how they are expected to reside in the alien world. At the same time, it signals to them how to fight against the identity crisis and make their valuable presence grounded on their contribution to the development of the world where they render their toil in the globalized scenario. A diasporic reading of Mukherjee's stories in the compilation assists in studying migration not simply as geographical movement but also as a step towards the transformation of the psychological, social, and cultural knowledge of the individuals. Accordingly, a diasporic feminist reading of Mukherjee's stories in the collection helps to scrutinize the pressure of gender norms and cultural traditions on immigrant women in their new societies. The research is significant because the readers of Mukherjee's stories will note how race, religion, and social prejudice impair immigrants from securing better opportunities and a sense of belonging in the foreign world.

Methodology

The research applies the qualitative textual approach, and it is principally based on the close reading of the selected stories from Mukherjee's book, *The Middleman and Other Stories*, from the theoretical perspective of diasporic literature highlighted by Robin Cohen in his book, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2010). Moreover, discourse on the diasporic issues presented by Salman Rushdie, Leela Gandhi, Stuart Hall, and other post-colonial critics is also taken as a theoretical tool to analyse how the leading characters of the stories struggle with hybrid identities in settling into a foreign land. The primary resources of the research are the stories, "A Wife's Story" and "The Middleman" from the anthology of short stories *The Middleman and Other Stories*. Likewise, related materials, research articles from the library, and literary websites on Mukherjee and her works are taken as the secondary sources to mark the research gap and to build the hypothesis.

The term "diaspora" is derived from Greek, implying scattering, or becoming victims of dispersal (Cohen, 2010). Diaspora, during the 5th century, had negative connotations, suggesting the dispersal of the Jews. But after the 1960s, diaspora was taken to indicate the global philosophy of the migrants seeking national and cultural identities in the new countries (Baubock & Faist, 2010). Because of the frequent physical transformations of the immigrants, they collect new kinds of experiences and knowledge. However, they cannot totally accept the new experiences of the new myths. Cohen (2010) considered that "diaspora evolved as the preferred and catch-all expression covering sin, scattering, emigration and the possibilities of repentance and return" (pp. 21-22). In this case, immigrants display their consciousness towards home and foreign cultures that become their diaspora identity.

Diaspora is identified as the "trauma of displacement whether it is of Jews or of Africans, as it evokes the specific traumas of human displacement" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 123). There are four important phases of diaspora (Cohen, 2010). In the first phase, the term "Diaspora" was mainly concerned with the study of the Jewish struggle after their dispersion. The second phase of diaspora appeared in the 1980s, deploying a metaphorical designation to describe different categories of people such as expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities tout court (Baubock & Faist, 2010). The third phase of diaspora was initiated by the social constructionist theorists in the mid-1990s. They sought to de-territorialize ethnic categorization. The fourth phase of diaspora is marked by a "modified reaffirmation of the diasporic idea" (Cohen, 2010, pp. 1-2). It was set in by the turn of the century to readdress the issues of the identities of the strangers. People from one geographical location migrate to the next in search of better opportunities, but start experiencing the pain of dislocation.

The diasporic thinkers discussed here are the principal research tools used to explore the immigrants' challenges in some stories of Mukherjee's anthology, *The Middleman and Other Stories*. The research in this dimension is

crucial to note how the migrants are tackling the issues of diaspora.

Results and Discussion

The protagonists, Alfie Judah in "The Middleman" and Panna Bhatt in "A Wife's Story" are immigrants from Mukherjee's anthology, *The Middleman and Other Stories*, who represent most of the migrants who have endured the pathos of hybrid identity of the diasporic dwelling. Most of the characters in the stories were originally born and brought up in their ancestor's land, but certain conditions forced them to leave their home. They have their own timidity and are unable to live up to their expectation. When the immigrants show their consciousness towards home and foreign cultures, they get indulged in seeking a diaspora identity (Cohen, 2010). So many characters from Mukherjee's anthology, *The Middle Man and Other Stories*, lack determination, while others have the compulsion of mimicking Western culture to make themselves dignified like advanced Westerners. One problem of the diasporic communities is that they may be affected by the process of dislocation and regeneration (Cohen, 2010; Hall, 1990). The leading characters in "The Middlemen" and "A Wife's Story" are compelled to face the humiliation unknowingly imposed by the natives. Even if the characters at first find it extremely difficult to acclimatize themselves to the alien land, later they find themselves naturalized and familiar over time.

"A Wife's Story" encapsulates the struggle of a migrant woman to refashion herself because of the difficulty of achieving wholeness when one is stretched between two cultures. In this story, a married woman from India, Panna, comes to America in the process of completing her special education course (Sharma, 2020). This woman has even ventured so far as to be the friend of another lonely migrant, Imre, a Hungarian, who also has a spouse and family back in his own country. Like most immigrants, Imre appears to be cooperative in the foreign world because he increases the dignity of Panna in her struggle for survival and identity. The diasporic communities form strong mutual bonds after they experience alienation in the foreign land (Baubock & Faist, 2010; Rana, 2022). Panna sometimes impulsively hugs Imre on the street. The instinct of seeking support from the immigrants is generated automatically among the diasporic community (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Natarajan, 2010). She dresses in "a beautiful sari and her heavy, ornate wedding jewelry to greet him at JFK Airport" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 25). But underneath the familiar customs, she is not the same woman at all.

Panna demonstrates dualism in her character and in the dress code whenever she comes out of condos and motels. In one context, she says, "Old colonies wear down" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 27). One feature of diasporic members is that they suffer from the dilemma (Cohen, 2010; Rushdie, 1991). Panna knows the feelings of immigrants and utters, "that's the trouble" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 27). Panna is mostly caught in a dilemma. The experience of hybrid culture thrusts a person into the dilemma (Cohen, 2010). Panna often demonstrates her trauma of being an immigrant. The pain felt by the diasporic community is not due to the behavior of the white but to the domination of the brutish white (Rana, 2022). The duality of Panna is expressed in these lines:

> "*I put on a sari to meet my husband at JFK. I don't forget the jewelry; the marriage necklace of mangalsutra*" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 28).

She has to get herself accustomed to the completely strange culture in comparison to her native culture. Forms of new culture impel a diasporic candidate to adapt to a new culture and power (Hall, 1990; Rushdie, 1991). Panna, despite the challenges, keeps on adjusting herself to her husband from a different nation.

"A Wife's Story" depicts the diasporic distress experienced by immigrants living in Eastern and Western cultures. Residing in America and marrying a Hungarian, Panna suffers from cultural conflict. The diasporic characters suffer from the confrontation with eerie discontinuity and displacement (Gandhi, 1998; Natarajan, 2010). Panna confronts the cultural conflict from the time of her marriage. Her parents prefer her marriage according to Hindu tradition, but she is in a land where all

the characters can independently decide about their lives and marriages. Panna's parents had consulted a marriage broker who was "her mother's cousin" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 30) and had even picked out a groom for her. Panna experiences freedom and individuality after walking out of the traditional Hindu marriage and leaving Ahmedabad for Manhattan. She learns from the way charity chin's lurid love life has "replaced inherited notions of marital duty" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 41). Panna becomes successful in adopting the cultural trends of both countries together. After marriage, Panna had to sacrifice her taste to adjust to his taste in food (Sharma, 2020). In anxiety, Panna iterates, "Love is a commodity, hoarded like any other. Mamet knows" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 31). Panna experiences the trouble of discontinuity as a diasporic character because Western culture influenced her so badly that her eastern cults of marital rituals were being suppressed after her marriage.

The story also includes elements of memory and longing for the past. Most South Asian-American writers, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, and Rohinton Mistri, portray the dilemma experienced living in an alien homeland (Janagarraj, 2026). This memory and nostalgia for the landscape of places and people of Mukherjee's childhood is often juxtaposed with the excitement and challenge of their new life (Gonzalez & Oliva, 2015). The diasporic characters experience many troubles and obstacles following their own mother culture in the foreign land, but later the characters follow both, taking major parts from the new land in its culture (Cohen, 2010). Mukherjee juxtaposes the spirit of a migrant finding a better career in the foreign land and the depression of losing the homeland in this story.

Panna's story appears very dramatic as she becomes the guide as well as protector for her husband whenever he visits her. This dramatic story is significant for the expression of diasporic pain and the reconciliation of the characters (Bhabha, 1994; Rushdie, 1991). To release herself from the traumas, Panna adopts a lustful culture with the Americans and adjusts. This indicates how the immigrants' psyche is shaped by Western culture. She utters, "My husband does not chase me around the sofa, but he pushes me down on Charity's battered cushions" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 35). A person learns to cherish sex to release his painful present (Heiman, 2001; Natarajan, 2010). Panna cherishes every time her husband supports her in the adoption of a new culture in America (Sharma, 2020). The new culture has impelled Panna to subordinate her native culture.

The Hindu and the Christian culture get merged in the foreign culture in Mukherjee's stories. Because of the physical transformations of the people, the diasporic community collects new kinds of experiences and knowledge (Cohen, 2010). The immigrants identify themselves with hybridity because they are influenced by many cultures and religions (Bhabha, 1994). Panna's husband compromises with his wife in the most probable way. Instead of sharing her hardships in getting adjusted to the alien land, Panna pretends to be adjusting with her husband. As long as he was with her in America, he imitated the American rites of using "deodorants, fragrances" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 40). Tension arises when her husband decides to go back to India and settle there, but Panna pretends that nothing has altered.

As a diasporic writer, Mukherjee depicts Panna according to her temperament that sometimes shifts from anger to anxiety and disappointment, from mirth to kindness, from the feeling of bondage to the perception of self-discovery of her existence and her sense of freedom. Mukherjee's careful manipulation of moods and emotional tones of the characters in her stories may be influenced by classical Indian literature, art, and music (Ali, 2025; Chakraborty, 2014). Panna utters, "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" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 38). What overpowers in Indian classical art is the instinct of a mood or emotion that is globally recognizable (Sharma, 2020). Panna sometimes has to stand by her husband shamelessly while he watches her free-floating body. This exposes the oddities and pain of adopting and adjusting to hybridity by a diasporic character. The immigrants get so influenced by the foreign cults that they

adopt them, but their own cults come in side by side (Cohen, 2010). The traditions of homeland and foreign cultures, and the feelings of excitement at something novel, make Panna laugh and cry. All these justify that Panna represents both cultures. Panna, however, is mostly inclined towards American culture in the later part, although she could not forget the upbringing and molding of her personality in her early days of marriage. She often expresses her feeling of dissatisfaction towards the foreign culture when she states, "Imre and the cab driver talk away in Russian. I keep my eyes closed. Maybe I'll write Steven Spielberg too; tell him that Indians do not eat monkey brains" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 39). We can understand that she was defending Indians by all means initially, but later she starts feeling herself identical to the Americans. When an immigrant has to adopt foreign values, he undergoes trauma (Cohen, 2010). In her desperate attempt to adapt to the new culture, Panna suffers from trauma and humiliating experiences during her initial stays in America.

Gradually, Panna begins to dislike Indian culture, clothes like saris, and other cultural norms. When an immigrant stays in a foreign land for a long time, he suffers from the dilemma of rejecting his cultural values (Bhabha, 1994). Panna remarks, "I un-pleat my silk sari, it no longer looks too showy-wrap it in Muslim cloth and put it away in a dresser drawer" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 31). This expression is a reflection that Indian culture fades away from Panna's life gradually. After marriage, Panna, as an Indian woman, experiences trouble having a concrete identity in America. The main problem with immigrants is that they remain in the delusion and the troubled state of the duality of identity (Cohen, 2010). After leaving India, Panna seems to have represented the dual reality of the diasporic psyche. In addition to being a wife, she has been pursuing her educational course of Ph.D. in America. Existence becomes a challenge for immigrants like Panna because of the new milieu and values. She has to bear whatever she obtains in an insulting way.

We can mark many contexts of an Indian immigrant's perception and experiences of the insults from the host members in Panna's life. The hegemonic behavior of the native is the principal cause of the trauma of the immigrants (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Panna's distress is often caused by the indifferent representations of the dominant white community. She replicates the traumatic psyche of those immigrant women who have been exploited by the diasporic situation of identity crises.

The diasporic ailment of the immigrants is powerfully portrayed in Mukherjee's story, "The Middleman". Alfie Judah, the narrator of the story, is a Jewish immigrant who is originally from Baghdad, Iraq, who encounters the pains of displacement (Chakraborty, 2014; Sharma, 2020). Although he "gets a U.S. citizen" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 4), after travelling to India and living in Bombay for some time, he finds himself a misfit wherever he visits. He is unable to adjust with his American wife in his home in Queens, New York, either. Alfie is a wheeler-dealer and a hustler who is not too fussy about how he makes his money (Maxey, 2019). He provides people with what they need, whether it is "guns, drugs, or cars" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 6), and he knows how to survive in a rough world. Diasporic personality is constructed by the identity politics of one's place of origin and the relationship an evolving with that of one's present home (Cohen, 2010; Radhakrishna, 1991). Alfie was compelled to fly to America because he was found to be making some "illegal dealings for the New Jersey judges" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 5). Alfie has no option but to use his provident fund for the New Jersey judges. Even though his new citizenship lies at risk, Alfie keeps on moving from one place to another.

Alfie is dark-skinned that becomes another cause for the Americans or the local people to dislike him. Diasporic situations come along with double identification, origin homeland and adopted new land identity, and the individual peril lies in the depth of his/her dual cultural consciousness (Cohen, 2010; Kumar, 2013). No one knows how to place Alfie: "To some, he is an Arab, to others, an Indian" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 6). Alfie's weakness, he himself confesses, is women. He might have been influenced by the culture of the foreign land in matters of love and sex. He becomes so passionate about making love with

Maria, and he obtains an opportunity to sleep with her for one night (Maxey, 2019). He takes this act of adultery as a chance to redeem himself from the diasporic distresses. Alfie also survives when "the guerrillas come to kill Clovis T. Ransome" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 7). As a result, he seems to relish the prospects of walking into San Vincente, the capital city, talking to people and finding some other way of keeping himself afloat.

As a diasporic character, Alfie endures many predicaments and traumatic experiences in his life. The problem with immigrants is that they might lose their identity in their attempt to imitate another culture in an alien world (Bhabha, 1994; Cohen, 2010). Alfie does not even care about losing his identity in the pursuit of gaining economic prosperity; he even dilutes his nationality. Confusion among the people about Alfie's personality makes us understand that he never belonged to the foreign land. To forget all his traumas, he opts for enjoying a lustful life with Maria, who is the wife of an immigrant, Clovis T. Ransome. Alfie narrates, "casually, she is unbuttoning her top, untying the button tabs" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 18). He had never sensed the rush of passion when his hands stroke her hips, and feels awkward when he finds her lying in his giant bed, "propped up, and her breasts keep the seat from falling" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 18). Thus, in a diasporic situation, the immigrants have to lose their identity and adjust to a new lifestyle.

Alfie invests so much energy, time, and money for the lustful gain. When a person is haunted by the trauma of existence, he is inclined to sex to forget his pangs (Heiman, 2001). Alfie enjoys himself while having sex, but later he feels completely dissatisfied. This situation makes it clear that all the activities he does are symbolically reddish in color. Alfie's association with red is his endeavor to challenge the authority imposed upon the immigrants. Masculinity is tainted by the will to possess a woman sexually (Tyson, 2006). In agony, Alfie often wishes to have changes in his life. He utters, "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" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 13). By the end of the story, he seems to be a little optimistic because he talks about happiness: "In the next few days, I'll walk down the muddy road to San Vicente, to the German bar with the pay phone" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 21). He wants a comfortable place to tackle the diasporic traumas. Thus, Alfie confronts traumatic experiences due to the displacement. He also lacks the power of determination and hence has to face many troubles in the course of his life in America (Siva, 2019). He wishes to trade his troubles for some sources of happiness. He talks about restoring happiness in his diasporic life. Alfie has a philosophy. Happiness can be brought if it is worth trading. Newer kinds of work become the interacting parts in the lives of the immigrants who get involved in hybridity culture or globalized culture (Bhabha, 1994; Cohen, 2010). We can understand from the expression that even in the pains those characters underwent, there is something to be brought with happiness. Most characters of Mukherjee's stories come to a realization that there is some sort of happiness in the final stage of diasporic pain in all the cases (Kumar, 2013). Alfie always endeavors to replace his anguish with happiness.

The trauma of living in an alien land is endured by almost all the characters. For instance, Clovis T. Ransome and his wife, Maria Ransome, in the story, "The Middlemen", suffer from traumatic experiences even if their culture is adjustable in comparison to Alife Judah's culture of complexities. Clovis T. Ransome is "an expatriate American" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 22), who has spent most of his life in theological settings and religion. Ransome has been charged with committing a fraudulent act because he had run away to Texas carrying fifteen million dollars in cash. He had just managed to escape the investigators from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Ransome is a player in the ruthless political game that operates in the unnamed country (Siva, 2019). Diaspora is supposed to have evolved out of sin, scattering, emigration, and the possibilities of repentance (Cohen, 2010). It appears that Ransome runs "a protection racket to shield Gutierrez" (p. 22), the minister of education, from his many enemies. Ransome might have made the pretty Maria his wife by running such rackets because

she was the president' mistress earlier. Maria now does not like her husband because he often beats her. That is why Maria kills him, shooting him with Andreas's pistol. The culture of diasporans is messed up with crime and confusion.

The marriage between Maria Ransome and Clovis T. Ransome possesses no love. Maria Ransome is a young, pretty "dark-skinned Indian woman" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 23), who always suffers from the ambivalent situation of living in a foreign land. Ambivalence is a tenet of a diasporic character as he or she intends to settle life in many ways (Bhabha, 1994). When Maria was a girl, she had planned to marry Andreas. But Gutierrez came to her school and took her for himself. Later, Maria was "partially brought and partially seduced by Ransome" (Mukherjee, 1988, p. 24). 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. One of the severe problems of the men in the patriarchal society is that they take women as commodities (Tyson, 2006). Maria allows Alfie to spend the night with her when they return from the guerrilla camp and when "her husband is in a drunken sleep" (p. 23). Even if there are many troublesome experiences to be undergone by the immigrants, they finally go for reconciliation (Cohen, 2010). Alfie looks for trading happiness. The traumatic experiences of the couple are unveiled when Mrs. Ransome shoots her husband without mercy. This sounds paradoxical, but Mrs. Ransome was compelled to do this for her security. If she hadn't shot her husband, he would have been shot brutally by the enemies. Here, the readers can mark a kind of mediation, a tenet of diasporans.

In the modern diasporic world, couples have their own ways of life. A wife may feel insecure and take the life of her husband. Both husbands and wives are found to be trapped in many murderous activities. Both stay concealing their pains.

Conclusion

The identity crisis embedded in the diasporic experiences remains crucial within the premises of Mukherjee's short stories and novels. The central characters of Mukherjee's stories strive to adapt to the new environment but cannot escape from experiencing hardships. The characters like Alfie Judah, Clovis T. Ransome and Maria Ransome in "The Middleman", and Panna Bhatt in "A Wife's Story" have overshadowed their real identity because they are bound to the alien and new environment. They can neither adjust themselves there nor come back to their ancestors' land at any cost. Rather, they have to remain in an alien world for their whole lives. They are obliged to pursue the unexpected and unwanted cultures, both the odds and evens of the people and land they are residing in. Undoubtedly, the major characters of the short stories display the real agony of the immigrants who are of non-Western ancestry. When one struggles to create the link between the past and present, one suffers from the ailments rooted in diasporic identity through which he is able to. Though the characters stand in different times and occur in different spaces, they share the common sentiments of diaspora. Mukherjee attempts to heal the cultural wounds of the immigrants through her creative fiction and short stories. Virtually, the stories examine the compromises, losses, and the adjustment involved in the process of acculturating new immigrants to American life, and most of the migrant characters in this collection are caught between two worlds and cultures. The research is expected to stand as a reference for scholars seeking to explore the psychological and traumatic experiences of people who live in foreign countries.

Acknowledgments

The researcher is grateful to the Post Graduate faculty members of the English Department at Degree Campus, affiliated to Tribhuvan University, Biratnagar, Nepal, for providing their invaluable help in collecting the reference books for the article and proofreading the article. This research did not receive any specific grant from public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agencies.

References

Ali, A. (2025). Negotiating Indian identity in a globalized world: A study of Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology*. https://doi.org/10.15680/IJIRSET.2025.1402048

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2013). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203777855

Baubock, R., & Faist, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Diaspora and transnationalism: Concepts, theories and methods*. Amsterdam University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mz31

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Chakraborty, D. (2014). The exuberance of immigration: The immigrant woman in Bharati Mukherjees. *International Journal of English and Literature.* https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2014.0528

Cohen, R. (2010). *Global diasporas: An introduction.* Routledge.

Gandhi, L. (1998). *The post-colonial theory.* Columbia University Press.

Gonzalez, M. L., & Oliva, J. I. (2015). Bharati Mukherjee's struggle against cultural Balkanization: The forging of a new American immigrant writing. *Indialogs*, *2*, 72–92. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/indialogs.25

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). Lawrence & Wishart.

Heiman, J. (2001). Sexual desire in human relationships. In W. Everaerd, E. Laan, & S. Both (Eds.), *Sexual appetite, desire and motivation: Energetics of the sexual system* (pp. 117-118). Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Janagarraj, K. (2026). Immigration and displacement: A study of identity crisis in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. *Shodh Manjusha: An International Multidisciplinary Journal, 3*(1), 190–194. https://doi.org/10.70388/sm250200

Kumar, N. (2013). *The fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A cultural perspective*. Atlantic

Maxey, R. (2019). Bharati Mukherjee and the politics of the anthology. *The Cambridge Quarterly*, *48*, 33-49.

Meer, A. (1989). Bharati Mukherjee by Amanda Meer. *Bombmagazine*. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/bharati-mukherjee/

Mukherjee, B. (1988). *The middleman and other stories*. Penguin Books

Natarajan, N. (2010). Introduction: Reading diaspora. In N. Emmanuel (Ed.), *Writers of Indian diaspora* (pp. 32-38). Rawat Publications.

Parameswaran, U. (1990). Reviewed work: The Middleman and other stories, Bharati Mukherjee. *World Literature Today*, *64* (2), 363.

Radhakrishnan, R. (1991). Ethnicity in an age of diaspora. *Transition*, *54*, 104-115. https://doi.org/10.2307/2934905

Rana, K. S. (2022, August 7). Diaspora issues in international affairs. *Diplo*. https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/diaspora-issues-international-affairs/

Rushdie, S. (1991). *Imaginary homelands*. Penguin.

Sharma, N. (2020). A study of psychological sufferings in the works of Bharati Mukherjee. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 26*(1), 339-343.

Shrivastwa, B. K. (2022, July 17). Dislocation and nomadism in Mukherjee's the tiger's daughter. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, *19*(3), 391-404. https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/11226

Siva, N. (2019, February). Social struggle of the protagonists of Bharathi Mukherjee in her stories, the Middleman and other stories. *Contemporary Literary Review India*, *6*(1). https://www.literaryjournal.in/index.php/clri/article/view/288/330

Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today.* Routledge.