



Transcending The Cultural Boundaries And Finding Feet: Representation Of Culture Shock U- Curve In The Novels Of Bharati Mukherjee

Sheeba Parvez^{1*}, Dr. Zeba Siddiqui²

^{1*}Research Scholar, Department Of English Literature, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, India- ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2977-6286>. Email: sheeba.parvez@s.amity.edu, sheebaparvez.agra@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, India. Email: zsiddiqui@gwa.amity.edu

Citation: Sheeba Parvez, et al. (2024) Transcending The Cultural Boundaries And Finding Feet: Representation Of Culture Shock U- Curve In The Novels Of Bharati Mukherjee, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 4263-4269

Doi: [10.53555/kuey.v30i4.2187](https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i4.2187)

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The new wave of modernization leads to the fusion of communities within the nations. Each community comprises various practices and attitudes incorporating indigenous as well as external elements. Each immigrant maintains the traditions of their specific cultural background. Anyone striving to connect and adapt to the cultural disparities in a foreign community will encounter discomfort and frustration, gradually understanding new traditions and eventually accepting and becoming part of the new culture. Furthermore, the physical as well as emotional strength of an immigrant will also influence this intercultural assimilation process. The objective of this research is to map the different stages of U-curve culture shock experienced by the characters in Bharati Mukherjee's novels and to strengthen the connection with the foreign culture.

Keywords: Assimilation Process; U-Curve Culture Shock; Culture; Culture Shock Stage, Bharati Mukherjee

INTRODUCTION

With the ascent of globalization, economy, industrialization, and modern means of transportation, people have migrated from one society to another due to employment, financial reasons, and several other immigration issues. Migration leads to cultural crisis, regional riots and religious disputes, cultural conflict, destruction of cultural homogeneity, and inter-cultural equality. The aforesaid culminates in an amalgamation of ideology, cultural misunderstandings, and methods of socialization. This advancement has the potential to increase the mobility of immigrants, enabling them to pursue many aspects of their daily lives. Immigrants can increase their standard of living and adapt to social progress by relocating to areas with sufficient resources to meet their needs (Hadawiah, 2019). Factors encouraging immigrants to relocate to densely populated regions include education, economy, and culture. In light of any of these three elements, immigrants have a sense of optimism or anticipation for better fulfillment of their aspirations and future prospects.

Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve theory and Oberg's (1960) culture shock theory are prominent ideas in the field of assimilation that have been used extensively in research on immigrants living temporarily in foreign environments. The U-curve theory is a conceptual framework that reflects the process of cultural transition from one society to another. The U-curve model of adjustment, first proposed by Sverre Lysgaard in 1955, has been refined and expanded by researchers like Oberg. Cora Dubois, an anthropologist, coined the term "culture shock" in the 1960s, describing the unsettling feeling of being involved in different civilizations.

Culture shock is a sensation of disorientation, uncertainty, or even dread when people face unfamiliar cultural practices. This can happen when immigrants migrate to another nation, encompassing everything from the landscape to the language and food. Culture shock refers to the emotional reaction resulting from unexpected cultural disparities and misconceptions (Bock, 1970), leading to feelings of powerlessness (Adler, 1975), increased emotional sensitivity, susceptibility to deception, and loss and mistreatment experiences (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). This paves the way for them to emphasize cultural understanding, even if explicit feedback does not always yield results as expected. This is due to differences in language, customs, and methods of communication, all of which require a process of learning new things that will later be understood and applied by the immigrant in their daily life (Devinta, Hidayah, Grendi, & Uny, 2015).

Learning the local language to communicate with the local population effectively is the most effective way to deal with culture shock. By learning about and adjusting to one's host culture, one can reduce the potential for cultural irritation, anxiety, and stress and improve the chances of successful communication (Mayasari & Sumadyo, 2018).

One of the essential requirements for the development of mental health is the ability to self-adapt. It's common for people to feel stressed or depressed when they're unable to adjust to their surroundings. However, the person who achieves self-balance in meeting the demands of both the immigrant and the environment is created only when he is able to adapt effectively to his surroundings. Those who are able to do so can feel greater happiness and less stress overall (Winkelman, 1994); an immigrant's ability to deal with culture shock depends on his or her familiarity and integration with the new culture in daily life. According to Kim, social beings engage in cross-cultural contact. It is the immigrant's responsibility to adapt to the local culture in order to communicate effectively. Since it demonstrates the importance of self-adaptation in reducing the burden of studying abroad, it is clear that this is also the case for foreign students (Hutapea, 2014). Therefore, the literature review aims to explain what culture shock is and to provide more theoretical context for the next researcher who may have only used culture shock theory to some extent in their research.

The U-shaped curve model of culture shock suggests that newcomers experience a "honeymoon phase" upon arrival in a new country, where immigrants feel exhilarated and fascinated by new places, followed by the Frustration Phase, which is characterized by discomfiture due to differences in gestures, nationalism, and ethnicity, marked by a rejection of the new culture. The Adjustment Phase, according to Furnham and Bochner (1986), where a person becomes linguistically and socially capable of negotiating, develops a sense of autonomy, and becomes more accessible to friends and a community of support, is where culture shock occurs. The Acceptance Phase is when visitors accept the customs of the new country as a way of living, allowing ethnographic construction to be most productive. The U-curve and culture shock theories suggest that assimilation is a process where immigrants relocate to a different culture, replacing their native practices with new ones. This process involves gradually relinquishing their native cultural heritage and assimilating the dominant culture's values, characteristics, and perspectives. Furnham and Bochner's U-curve model, consisting of four stages, has been widely used in research, but scholars have criticized it due to methodological shortcomings and the lack of empirical support for the existence of a U-curve pattern in the process of assimilation. Additionally, research findings indicate that the process of assimilation varies between immigrants (Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008).



Figure 1. Lysgaard's (1955) U-shaped curve

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian-American-Canadian writer, was a prolific author of novels, short stories, and nonfiction works. Her novels trace the psychological progress of immigrants through a U-curve model of culture shock adaptation. The U-curve model represents the emotional trajectories that people undergo during culture shock, including disillusionment, adaptation, and ultimate absorption. Mukherjee's literary works depict immigrants grappling with the complexities of cultural assimilation, experiencing metamorphosis while fostering a dynamic state of identity. The complex process of human adaptation to new surroundings involves a dynamic interaction between cultural changes and genetic adaptations. Understanding the relationship between cultural and genetic adaptation is crucial to understanding the multifaceted nature of human adaptation to unfamiliar circumstances.

According to Furnham (2004), an educational institution should have a comprehensive facility that provides knowledge to enable students to develop a profound ability to deal with culture shock through self-adaptation. The local authorities have developed a form of cultural literacy that has the potential to reduce the cultural stress faced by migrants. This cultural literacy encompasses knowledge about the local culture and its surroundings, enabling foreigners to gain a comprehensive understanding of the culture they will encounter

before relocating to a new region (Levy and Shirave, 2012). Bharati Mukherjee's works on the immigrant experience in literature have been extensively studied, but there is a gap in understanding the depiction of culture shock in her novels and the character's journey through it. Understanding Mukherjee's representation of culture shock can provide insights into cultural assimilation, identity formation, and the challenges faced by immigrants. This research can also contribute to a deeper understanding of her literary style and thematic concerns. The exploration of culture shock and transcending cultural boundaries in literature can help foster empathy and intercultural understanding in a globalized world.

REPRESENTATION OF CULTURE SHOCK U-CURVE BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE

Since Bharati Mukherjee experienced various stages of culture shock when she moved from India to America at a very young age, she has vividly depicted this experience in her novels. Mukherjee's writings, influenced by her Indian immigrant background, focus on themes of identity, assimilation, and the search for immigrant identity in a foreign land. Her works reveal the transformation of identities and the impact of Western ideology on her characters. This representation is at its best in her novels *Wife* (1975) and *Jasmine* (1989).

Honeymoon Phase: The protagonists in Mukherjee's novels seem extremely overwhelmed, enthusiastic, and hopeful as they transcend the boundaries of the culture of India, which was a culture full of limitations and restrictions for them. In the novel *Wife*, the protagonist, Dimple, fantasizes about the obligations of her daily life, which include water crisis, power cuts as well as problems of surviving the day and adjusting with her in-laws. Her spouse, Amit, young man whom her parents find acceptable to her, but he does not live up to their expectations. The monotony of marriage is a problem for Dimple. She hadn't planned on sharing an apartment with her mother-in-law that was gloomy and dirty. At the same time, she fantasizes about Western culture, which will provide her with freedom. Dimple is dissatisfied with her married life in Calcutta and wants to travel to the United States. Dimple fantasizes about a spacious along with her myth-busting visions, ...apartment in America to resemble the sets in Raj Kapoor's movie: living rooms in which the guests could break into song and dance, winding carpeted staircases, sunken swimming pools, billiard tables, roulette wheels, baby Grand pianos, Bars and velvet curtains (*Wife*, 64).

She was supposed to live in a fantasy world and dreamed of becoming a librarian in America after immigrating to America and wanted to be independent as depicted: "she seems to be a more interesting person by enrolling in evening classes; perhaps she could become a librarian as many American Indian women have done so, according to rumours" (*Wife*, 43). Despite the fantasy of Dimple, the protagonist of the novel *Jasmine* her husband was looking for a good opportunity that would make him dream of a foreign country: "but in the town, every little flat had a television set, and everyone had a close relative in Canada or the United States bringing back the latest gadgets" (*Jasmine*, 88). At the time of the partition, Jasmine and her father loved listening Punjabi songs on the radio and Urdu language shows but refused to listen to Hindi, because he didn't want this partition.

....he would tune in to the Pakistani radio broadcasts from Lahore and listen for their Punjabi language shows. The names of those Singers and actors from the Pakistan side were more familiar to me growing up than their Indian counterparts. (*Jasmine*, 42)

Frustration Phase: Bharati Mukherjee's novels represent the frustration of the characters as they gradually begin to realize the difficulties in the communication process. The new culture also seems alien to them, which creates obstacles for people in adopting the new lifestyle. They find everything in the new culture annoying, be it language barriers, different value systems, traditions, and the lifestyle at large. Initially they enjoy the new culture, but later it begins to irritate them, causing loneliness, insecurity and homesickness. This phase of frustration is experienced by the protagonist in the novel *Wife* in various ways. America has brought a ray of hope in Dimple's sad life. Yet, when she reaches the shop to buy a cheesecake, she also faces communalism and stereotyping, after which she becomes frustrated and recalls the Indian market, where she did not know anyone about that community. There is no need to tell to whom it belongs. As she was walking home with Meena, asking her to buy something, she imagined the market at the lake, where twenty hawkers would be looking at her for any spare coin she might have. She believed that on her third morning in America, she would come very close to being killed.

For the first time, she faced a period of disillusionment with American culture, which left her in a state of insecurity. New problems arise about her in the United States. Despite Amit's struggle to find work, Amit does everything he can to keep her happy. The fact is that he can still spend most of his time pleasing his wife happy because he has to work long hours. This convinced Dimple as if he did not care about her. She used to sit in front of the television for hours. She spends most of her time viewing films and television series with murder as a central theme. At Vinod Khanna's party, she is offered a job, but Amit rejects the job offer for her by giving a reason to Vinod Khanna; also, Dimple is unable to add two and two. She will soon destroy his company.

During the traditional upbringing he left it as a bondage for himself and also found Amit's thinking to be patriarchal. She saw Amit as an obstacle in her career and thought that he did not let her live her life her way, and that is why she started hating doing anything for Amit, which she was used to, "but in New York, these

little gestures had begun to irritate her” (Wife, 61). Dimple is disappointed with the American culture and her husband Amit's changed behavior in the new environment. Later, Amit's professional life troubles him as he gets very little time for his wife.

She concluded that when Amit was actually the boss, conditions were better at Dr Sarat Banerjee Road. She met him there with limitations, regarding authorities as well as other matters. It seems that Amit is broken from within and has become weak and tired here in New York. After leaving the Sens apartment in Queens and shifting to Manhattan, she felt lonely and traumatized. Since Dimple was going through stress and poor sleep after immigration, she suffered from insomnia, due to which Amit was the person she wanted to dream about, but she knew she would not. In difficult times, she listed her spouse, in the hierarchy of practicality, a blender, a colour TV, a cassette player, a tape recorder, and a stereo, even though Amit did not foster her fantasies.

Amit went to work the whole day and came back in the evening. However, she had to stay at home all day, didn't try to move out, and didn't talk to the neighbours, which caused Dimple to collapse “stars Dimple recalled having read somewhere implode she felt like a star collapsing inwardly” (Wife, 119). The country, America, instead of giving her happiness, puts her in depression because of the first-day incident, due to which she faces difficulty in knowing less English. Communication problems let her into a deep well of thoughts which distanced her from Amit “if fate had assigned her not Amit but some other engineer, she might have been a different kind of person” (Wife, 127).

In Queens, Dimple (in *Wife*) heard much about muggings and killing. Yet, here in Manhattan, whenever she hears police sirens that make her sleep disappear and fill her with fear, she lets the sirens as “they were reminders of the dangerous world”. (Wife, 120) However, she knew that in any new beginning, she would have to begin with the pain. When she immigrated to America she convinced herself that suffering was a natural part of any new beginning, and she gave it a special place among the beautiful buildings of her new life. But she had not anticipated that her intelligence would be so useful. Dimple's idiosyncrasy slowly but surely intensifies. Dimple perceives “her life was slow full of miscalculations” (Wife, 178). After spending several months in America, Amit and Dimple had not saved enough money to cause him to think about criticizing Dimple for her spending:

we should have more potatoes and less frozen broccoli you are too extravagant the important thing as I've been working seven months, and we haven't even saved the thousand dollars (Wife, 212)

In Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine*, immigrants dreaming of fulfilling meaningful existence in a distant nation must endure indignities to survive in a new land. Also, one has to kill the previous one to adopt a new identity without any difficulty, just like Du (the stepson of Bud) has adopted, and he has to go through many problems to survive there without any problem. She held back her astonishment and revulsion. This nation has a plethora of methods to degrade and disappoint.

You're very rude! What likely crossed our minds? Just so happens that his history instructor in Baden, Iowa, speaks a little street Vietnamese. Where would he have acquired it, then? There are no risk-free, kind methods to reinvent oneself. Because of the pictures in our dreams, we murder who we were and can be. (*Jasmine*, 29)

Since Jasmine wants to fulfill her husband's dream, she leaves for America with her doctoral documents, but here she turns out to be a refugee and is shocked about her situation. She aptly says-

They seem to be the rejected and deported, strange settlers travelling to strange destinations who emerge at the edge of tarmacs and are hauled in former army trucks where we have been brutally assaulted before becoming moved to prior to take portions of enclosed areas wherever unpleasant, groggy-eyed immigration officers anticipate their bribe. (*Jasmine*, 101)

As she arrives on American soil for the first time, she is taken to a motel room by Half-Face, a life-changer who comes into her life and tries to rape her. At that time, she recalls Prakash's memories about the pregnancy when she wanted to start a family with him, but he continued to deny it due to delivery complications. Yet, here she saw: “for the first time in my life, I understood what Evil was about it was about not being human Half-Face was from an underworld of evil” (*Jasmine*, 116).

She loses all hope of survival, and she tries to commit suicide, but her husband's dream doesn't let her die, and she incarnates the goddess Kali Avtar and murders him, and leaves. Jasmine dreamed of opening a store in Tampa with her husband in America, but unfortunately, after Prakash's death, she decided to fulfil his dream alone; because of this, she faced problems she didn't have a single penny to survive in the country and did not even drink a sip of water for the first two days.

In India, I would have come upon at least a village or two, but in Florida, there was only the occasional country store or trailer Park. I hadn't a penny. Honoring all prescriptions for a purified body, anticipating only release from this world, I had not eaten in two days. (*Jasmine*, 128)

Adaptation Phase: In Mukherjee's novel the person who is an immigrant becomes regularly acquainted with the culture of the country, such as food and language, and local ways of life. In the novel, *Wife* the protagonist, Dimple, attends Vinod Khanna's party with Amit and finds the Americanized Indians Mrs. Sen and Mrs. Bhattacharya commenting on someone's hygiene in Bengali at the party, for which she hesitatingly replies: “but we are terribly dirty too.....I mean we don't think anything of committing a nuisance in public even well-dressed people committed a nuisance on the streets” (Wife, 63).

Thus, Dimple slowly tries to adjust there, her English is not good, she realizes this in America, and she can only be held accountable because the conversation took place in Bengali. Dimple was learning household chores

according to America, "Meena put her feet up on the coffee table and gave Dimple household hints: wash saris in the bathtub, throw them in the dryer, fold them in half and use spray starch" (Wife, 70). At that time, she learned about the muggings and killings in America, leading Meena to advise her: "if the washing machine is in the basement of the building, let Amit do the laundry...these are not male jobs; only women are assigned to them, but Amit was also learning how to do laundry." (Wife, 70)

As she assimilates into American culture, Amit becomes an obstacle because he is from an elite patriarchal family. Hence, she thinks she knew that if she drank alcohol, Dasgupta would have been accused of fathering an illicit, drunken youngster, according to Amit's letters to his mother, who would then call them. Similar to the situation on Park Street, the rumour mill in Calcutta was equally busy in New York. Dimple and Amit both try to learn English for their survival in America. To survive in a new country, one has to adapt to a country's language for easy to communicate: "challenging seemed to be a recently acquired word for Amit, a replacement for secure employment, and Dimple listened for the tone in which it was used to determine if it meant good or bad she realized that he was full of new words in his conversation even the Bengalis sentences were peppered with American words". (Wife, 103) While assimilating into Western culture, Dimple tries: "the purple-tinted sunglasses are perhaps the most typical index of American culture. For Dimple, they are disguises borrowed from the west, just like Marsha's clothes and the apartments in which she is living." (Wife, 174)

She keeps a secret from her husband Amit that she has involved in an extramarital affair with Milt Glasser. As she tries to adapt to western culture, this secret, along with the guilt of being an orthodox Hindu wife, takes over her mind and she isolates herself within the walls of her home, which makes him weird. She had found that there were no guidelines for the pre-infidelity stage. Therefore, that was the only stage which was challenging. Ultimately, it came down to immigrant initiative and a life devoted to pleasing others rather than oneself. Amit was unaware of how close she had come to abandoning him and was suffering the consequences of experiencing extreme fear and loneliness. Jasmine has influenced Iowa's people through her fusion of two food cultures habits; where "people are getting used to some of my concoctions, even if they make a show of fanning their mouths they get disappointed if there's not something Indian on the table" if you don't want the person you're meeting to run into me, say so, "he grabbed my wrist and twisted it, but not hard enough to hurt". (Wife, 9)

In the process of acculturation, the host culture reflects one's immigrant values. The skilled person can cope any scenario and survive easily. To adopt a migrant, one has to make oneself so efficient like Jasmine, because the people around her cannot understand her as different from them; she can also easily interpret aerogrammes letters and paintings, and those people also let her go as an intelligent person and dark tone girl, racially she is dark-toned which gives her information about her ancestors or she says she may be related to Greek: "In Baden, the farmers are afraid to suggest I'm different. They've seen the aerograms I receive, the strange lettering I can decipher. To them, alien knowledge means intelligence...for them, experience knowledge, or else it is wasted" (Jasmine).

She does not know Sanskrit but Urdu, due to which people call her Pakistani, that is, people associate any language with religion. However, she practices Hinduism, and experience is followed by knowledge. Every country differentiates itself from others through language and values; since Jasmine is a caregiver, only people in Taylor's house call her because she can interpret paintings, letters, and everything. To survive here in America, Lillian Gordon advised her to work on her walk and change her attitude. If she has confidence in her moves, no one will stalk her; if a person has confidence in their walk, then they can survive easily in a foreign country; "what American, she exhorted me; she showed me how I worked hard on the walk and department within a week she said I would lose my shy side." (Jasmine, 132)

Acceptance Phase: The final stage of culture shock is portrayed by Bharati Mukherjee's novel characters how they accepted the new surroundings and didn't feel desolate, but accepted the culture and got used to it. Further, "changing citizenship is easy, swapping culture is not", and Bharati integrated this concept. Even Mukherjee's reviewer Maya Manju Sharma describes her as "essentially Hindu and essentially moral", yet Dimple, the main character in *Wife*, Mukherjee's second fiction and a contender for the Governor General's Award, disproves both of these claims. In the fiction, *Wife*, the character Ina Mullick, an Americanized Indian, has an immigration philosophy where one has to struggle to survive, and things take time to get used to where it takes time to completely detox from India. They have purchased everything they had been hankering after by the second year. Then they either return home or remain here and vegetate, failing which, they must live here like everyone else. The protagonist has accepted the American way of living, but she wants to keep it with her traditional look. She also didn't want to realize that Dimple might feel disgusting in Ina's attire, as Dimple protested, but she felt more natural in the saree.

Jane (in *Jasmine*) accepts Western culture to fulfill her dead husband's dream, Prakash. Jasmine is not only influenced with Indian culture but also influences Bud. She spent years with Bud, and in those years, she taught Bud about Indian worship taught Hinduism philosophy. "In our three and half years together, I have given Bud a new trilogy to contemplate Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and he has lent me his Musical, Brock and Gibson." (Jasmine, 8) She taught him about the Hindu trinities with her identity accepted for western culture; Brahma is 'The Creator', while Vishnu also known as 'The Preserver', is the supreme being who creates, protects, and transforms the universe and Shiva as 'The Destroyer'. In contrast, he taught her about Western culture. As she is narrating her previous life, she calls her father's death as Pitaji's assignment of life makes

her stand in western culture in Iowa, which she explains where she compares her scar to the third eye of Lord Shiva: “enlightenment meant seeing through the third eye and sensing designs in history’s muddles. I think that maybe Pitaji’s assignment was to stand me in Iowa, bring me to bud and make possible the baby I am carrying, or bring Du and me together in America.” (Jasmine, 60)

Ironically, since she (Jasmine) accepted western culture, she was forced to live with Bud in sexual relationship, who is also a divorcee, and to embrace his adopted son Du as her son. However, she was not yet become a mother, and she has not become a mother till yet; she got motherhood before becoming a mother. She assassinated her prior self to survive in Western society, and she killed her former life to stay in Western culture: “a mother, even one no older than a sister, can be forgiven if she looks in because the door is open a crack because it gives a little when she leans her shoulder on it. Try me with your homework. I used to be pretty good in my day. He laughs, but something is wrong. I can see it in the stiffened neck.” (Jasmine, 28)

Although with Bud, she begins to feel lonely. If Du hadn’t left, she would not have fled to Taylor, abandoning Bud—the helpless, handicapped man—behind. She may have been envious of Du at some point in her life because he was eventually able to make his path and maintain his independence. She couldn’t keep her identity alive. She admits that she was in awe and maybe even a little proud. She had no idea that Du had established a life for himself among the Vietnamese in Baden. Since living in Flushing, she hasn’t spoken to any Indians outside her infertility doctors, Drs. Jaswant and Patel. Her genetic change was hyphenated as Du’s. He was astonished by how quickly he became an American. Jasmine lost their shyness as she was a girl in Hasnapur village; she made her former identity to be dead and transformed herself into a new lifestyle, as per the new environment: “Jazzy in a t-shirt, tight cords and running shoes, I couldn’t tell if with the hasnapuri sidle I’d also abandoned my hasnapuri modesty.” (Jasmine, 132)

After facing many problems as an immigrant to America, she eventually found her identity as a ‘caregiver’. She gets this identity while working in the house of Taylor and Wylie, and she has to take care of their adopted girl child Duff. While working in the Taylor’s house, she learned that in this new culture, they don’t waste their time waiting for their child. They adopt children they are not like Indians, who have values and emotions for their child: “caregiver. The words sang off my tongue. I was a professional, like a school teacher or a nurse. I wasn’t a maidservant”. While working for Taylor, she falls in love with him and wants to be with him forever, but she has a fear in her mind about astrology which was made years ago in Hasnapur Village, to whom she would die apart from this. She had a partner for each identity she took:

Taylor, who didn’t believe in miracles, wanted me to stay, at least until Wylie had decided between lover and husband..... Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, and Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali. (Jasmine, 196)

She describes her feelings for each of her partners:

I came closest to the headiness, dizziness, porousness of my days with Prakash. What I feel for Bud is affection. Duty and prudence count. Bud has kept me out of trouble. I don’t want trouble. Taylor’s car is gobbling up the highways. (Jasmine, 210)

CONCLUSION

Intercultural assimilation and adaptation are complex processes involving multiple stages and factors. Culture shock, a common occurrence among immigrants, is a result of cultural differences and can lead to discomfort and frustration. The U-curve model of culture shock suggests that individuals experience stages such as the honeymoon, crisis, and adjustment stages during their cross-cultural adaptation process. The physical and emotional strength of immigrants is crucial in the process, and resilient and adaptable immigrants are more likely to manage difficulties. Immigrants often maintain a strong sense of attachment to their cultural identity, providing pride, belonging, and continuity in their lives. This study analyzed the U-curve culture shock encountered by the protagonists in Bharati Mukherjee’s literary works, providing valuable insights into the intricate dynamics and intricacies associated with intercultural assimilation. Understanding these aspects can help improve understanding and foster stronger connections with foreign cultures.

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