

Portrayal of women in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine

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Abstract

The current study attempted to emphasize the concerns about women immigrants worldwide and their representation in the diaspora of India writing. In the diaspora, the majority of women experience various forms of discrimination and are consistently viewed as inferior to their male counterparts. While it is true that women in the diaspora face numerous challenges, they are also speaking out against marginalization, oppression, and oppression of this sort. Because of their strong feminism, Indian diaspora women writers have given immigrant women a voice. This study aims to critically examine the challenges faced by women living in the diaspora and explore several perspectives that aim to combat discriminatory attitudes prevalent in a society dominated by men. This paper will evaluate Bharati Mukherjee novel Jasmine critically to comprehend the effects of Indian women in a discriminatory environment.

Keywords

Feminism, Marginalization, Discrimination, Diaspora, Domination

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Representations of South Asian immigrant women in Western world as passive victims, South Asian diasporic women writers also centre South Asian immigrant women's long tradition of activism and struggle on the sub-continent and in the diaspora. Within this structure, they build up alternative models of negotiating such culture specific and repeatedly mis-shapen concepts as sati, arranged marriages, or Muslim body politics, and they provide transnational contextualizations (Schlote 402).

There is need to analysis representation of gender especially women to social, economic and political contexts in diaspora. Although in 21st century South Asian community is one of the largest and fastest growing immigrant populations in the diasporic space, there is a decrement of social science and literary research about these communities.

The number of writers have understood the importance of gender, marriage, and family within South Asian diasporic culture; however, relatively little research has explored South Asian women's lived experiences from their own perspectives or across generations. South Asian diasporic women writers deal with the diasporic feelings and of crossover journeys, in South Asian women's novels basically, as immigrants they create their own identity and shown their representation in diaspora.

The postcolonial era has witnessed enormous changes in human mobility. The factors responsible for the migration of the South Asian population to different parts of the world are mostly economic disparity, poverty, unemployment, political turmoil, economic crisis, and social disorder in this region. The South Asian people were/are migrated for various job opportunities and menial works. In this process of migration, women have equally contributed for their families. However, male dominant mentalities one-way or other suppressed and

oppressed their rights and made their lives horrible. The history of women subjugation and oppression is vast and quite difficult to understand through male perspective because most of the male writers have been drawing miss-representation of women in their writings. In this regard, many women writers have started writing to present real picture of the society and their own experiences in the process of migration and diaspora. They have largely focused or centralised women issues such as women subjugation, oppression, and unevenness in male dominant society.

The gender representation is very significant in diaspora to reach into depth of various issues of women. Especially, first generation immigrant communities in different parts of the world from South Asia have significant gender role in home as well as in host societies. It is also significant that as preservers of tradition, culture and rituals in diaspora. They are forcefully responsible to reproduced traditional societies diasporic space. Jasmine is a novel of Indian diasporic writer Bharati Mukherjee set in the 1980s Punjab as well as United States of America. After migrating to United States from India, she tries to adopt new way of life for settle in new culture.

Bharati Mukherjee has provided very strong voice to her character Jasmine to fight against all odds. The story of the novel Jasmine revolves around the titular character called Jasmine. She has faced different issues of identity and also witness brutality of men in new land.

Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine is a novel about the journey and different kind of development of Indian woman. She tried a lot to assimilate in American way of life. The experiences of Jasmine developed from the experiences of Bharati Mukherjee who remained a part of diaspora till her death. Jasmine as a central character of the novel plays different roles in her

life. Mukherjee portrayed her characters in a very beautiful manner because she was very flexible as well as courageous to obtain her identity in new found land.

There are different kinds of themes used by Bharati Mukherjee to convey her message about the predicament of women in diasporic society. Mukherjee has given free hand to her character to choose her own way because after the death of her husband she decided to migrate to the United States but after reaching to the future country she maintains relationship with two persons. She develops relationship with these people because she wants to survive in United States of America but failed to give true love to both men. The question is that, whether she really loves these people or just shows her desired for living. So, the answer is that, she only develops her relationship to survive in new land. Jasmine only follows her own heart to reach her goal. As the protagonist of the story, the identity of Jasmine and life defined by various names in different stages of her life. In early part of her life, she was very much bounded to Indian culture and tradition due to her family background but after that she immigrated to America and her migration to America was fully illegal. She was very much focused on her goal to settle in America and thus struggled a lot to find her identity and change her belief with the representation of her dream of America.

When Jasmine was in India, she got married to Prakash who always considered her as sexual figure and caretaker cum wife. But the fact is that, he never humiliated her because for him she was a very innocent wife who devoted to traditional Indian culture. Prakash showed his love to her wife and thus changed her name Jyoti to Jasmine. He was very much eager to migrate to the city. Prakash gives a new name to Jasmine to change her old identity. Simultaneously, Jasmine preserves her two distinct identities. Bharati Mukherjee's novel gives the adventurous life to the protagonist Jasmine, a girl from the small village who migrates to the United States of America and later encounters different changing identities to adjust in new culture and that is the reason behind her strong attitude. The novel depicts the present situation of Jasmine as well as her memory of past that encourages her to shift her identities.

In a nutshell way, Bharati Mukherjee has provided very strong message through her novel *Jasmine*. Her character articulates her own experiences as an Indian woman in America. She has shown women representation in diaspora through her novel and will power of women. The journey of Jasmine from small village girl to American woman is very heart touching because after the death of her husband she went to America to fulfil the dream of her husband. Mukherjee has depicted harsh realities of American society and struggle of Indian women to settle in new land. She has also shown both sides of America. The first side that, provided all sort of opportunities to women but the second side shows the horrible nature of American society. Jasmine has faced sexual abuse in America after her arrival. But Mukherjee has given very strong voice to Jasmine to fight against unjust activities and overcome all the problems.

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