

Realisation of Self In Bharathi Mukherjee's Novel Jasmine

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Abstract

Migration studies in Literature helps to understand the struggles and difficulties faced by the immigrant people in an alien land. The very central theme found in migrational studies is the search for the self identity and the crisis to discover their identity as an individual. Bharathi Mukherjee, an Indian American-Canadian writer, in her work Jasmine, portrays the protagonist as the narrative of a youthful Indian lady who encounters identity crisis and a social clash happened in her life . As a diasporic writer, Bharathi Mukherjee imprints the struggles of an immigrant especially women characters who faces turmoils at every stage in their life. The objective of the paper is to bring out, how the protagonist of the novel Jasmine try to assimilate herself into the foreign culture where she gains new independence as she discovers her individual identity and by challenging the people who had discouraged her to watch her reposition the stars in her life. Such a great amount of disarray on the point delivers self-identity which can be abridged as a trouble of finding a settle place for oneself.

Keywords

Immigrant people, struggles, self Identity, diasporic, individuality, foreign culture

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1. Introduction

Diaspora is nothing else but creating a new identity in an alien land, accommodating and adjusting to the new cultural space and dealing with it positively. The term Diaspora is applied to the migrants or the people who have been displaced from their own native land, have emigrated from their native land due to various reasons. They are unable to come to terms with reality, they are dislocated and henceforth, lost, caught in the unidentical two worlds, engulfed in the crisis cross and finds no way to come out of it. The detachment with its own native land gives a certain kind of trauma to the soul but still people try harder to put together and seize the moment of settling down into that whole new world.

Thus diasporic fiction deals with the literature which combines with it the anguish and sufferings of such displaced individuals. When a person leaves his native land and enters another, his old values comes into conflict with the other. The condition of people living in a Diaspora is always under dilemma and they are always found in a dual state and in confusion and clashes. They are always haunted by a sense of isolation, identity crisis, dislocation and alienation and other corresponding issues which immerse them from all the sides. 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, Jasmine tries to adopt new way of life to settle in new culture.

Bharati Mukherjee is a versatile writer with great creative sensibilities. Mukherjee has received several prestigious awards including the National book critic, Critic award, (1988) and in addition to novels, has produced articles and book

length notification. She exists as a unique writer, who continues her experimentation on a wider canvas. Her protagonists are mainly characters who are bound to confront difficulties. In the novel 'Jasmine' she portrays an Indian woman who is pushed at the threshold struggling miserably to save her Indian self. Jasmine is a story of transformation and assimilation of diverse cultural societies and the writer presents the true picture of the life of the migrants

Bharati Mukherjee has portrayed and given a very strong voice to the protagonist in the novel Jasmine to fight against all the odds. The story of the novel Jasmine revolves around the central character called Jasmine. She has faced different issues of identity and also had witnessed the brutality of men in a foreign country. Bharati Mukherjee's novel Jasmine, the protagonist Jasmine as Jyoti, who lives in a small village of Hasnapur in Punjab. She is renamed Jasmine after her marriage to Prakash. Prakash wishes her to become a modern woman and as he calls her in her conversion from "Jyoti" to "Jasmine" both names perceives herself as, and eventually becomes the figure that Prakash desires to her to become. Her renaming is a sign of her initial migration away from traditional India. Jyoti and Jasmine are two separate selves, yet Jasmine finds herself acclaiming both identities. Suddenly Prakash is murdered and Jasmine immigrates to America all alone to accomplish his dreams. Upon her arrival in Florida, she meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and his unmannerly treatment gives her, her first taste of American ethnic categorization. Half-Face sees her only as a sexual being and rapes her. After that incident Jasmine finds that she cannot run away from this new

perception of her identity. Thus she turns to aggression in order to express the struggle she is experiencing. She stabs Half-Face to death and in this act she finds the strength to continue living and vows to initiate a new life in America, separate from India and the immature identity of her past.

Hence Jasmine's identity is formed not through construction alone, but also by the devastation of her existing self. Jasmine soon finds herself muffled by the sluggishness of this home for it was entirely inaccessible from everything American. Considering it to be a stasis in her succession towards a new life, she tries to separate herself from being an Indian and stop thinking about her past completely.

Jasmine then meets Lillian Gordon, who takes her in. Mrs. Gordon is also housing three Kanjobal women. She calls Jasmine "Jazzy," and helps Jazzy get to New York to meet with Professor Vadhera, who was a professor of Prakash in his college days. He is the one who encouraged Prakash to go to America to pursue his dreams. Lillian had a daughter named Kate Gordon-Feldstein who works as a photographer in the city of New York. Lillian is later sent to jail for "exploiting" undocumented for free cooking, cleaning and yard work. Jasmine then went to New York with Lillian. For five months, Jasmine lives with Professor Vadhera, whom she calls Professorji. She becomes depressed because she fears to leave the house without a green card. Professorji agrees to get her a green card, for fifty thousand rupees, or three thousand dollars.

After getting green card in New York Jasmine begins working for Wylie and Taylor Hayes, friends of Kate Gordon-Feldstein. She moves in with them in Manhattan to take care of their adopted daughter, Duff. Taylor calls her "Jase." Wylie falls out of love with Taylor and falls for Stuart. Wylie leaves Taylor, but Jase continues to take care of Duff. She falls in love with Taylor, but one day while the three of them are at the park, Jase spots Sukhwinder, the murderer who killed Prakash. Because of fear after seeing the murderer she flees from New York to Iowa. She chooses Iowa because Duff's birth mother lives in Iowa.

But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased. The inevitability of memory, and the boundless nature of time and space is strained once again and Jasmine finds her life unclear by the different consciousness through which she now experiences the world. She loses even her sense of self expression. Unable to live with this embarrassment of contradictory identities she flees to Baden County, Iowa to give her life with a fresh start. The end of the novel finds Jasmine moving to California with Taylor, uncertain of what the future will bring but nevertheless convinced in her decision to depart.

Bharati Mukherjee through her novel Jasmine conveyed a very strong message to the readers. The protagonist character in the novel expresses her own experiences as an Indian woman in America. As a diasporic writer, she has shown women's struggle in diaspora through her novel and the will

power of women in an alien land. 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 fulfill the dream of her husband. Mukherjee has depicted harsh realities of American society and struggle of Indian women to settle in a foreign land.

She has also shown both sides of America. The first side that, provided all sort of opportunities to women in an alien land but the second side shows the horrible nature of an American society will do to an immigrant. When Jasmine decided to move to America she has faced sexual abuse by the American in the flight. Though she faced many struggles she didn't give up on her husband's dream and proceed with her dream. Bharathi Mukherjee has given a very strong voice to Jasmine to fight against unjust activities happened to an immigrant in an alien land and how she had overcome all the problems. Mukherjee's female characters are immigrants and go through a series of cultural shocks, but they are capable and commence the heroic journey to establish their identities. Eventually; she has received significant attention in almost every part of the world and in just a short period of twenty-five years. Although she has been recognized as the voice of expatriation immigrants, the sense of scrutiny of the release of her novel reveals that she has written all novels with the views of women in particular. Her female characters are victims of immigration. She focuses on the difficulties and the result of immigration. As the representative of the male dominating society, the man has, in the end, been liberated from the center of women's gravitation. The woman is now going to have her gravitational power over the fullness of the patriarchy.

Not only Jasmine even the other characters in Jasmine are all exiles, expatriates, wanderers and people on the move, casting off old lives easily as a snake sheds its skin. They are Third World refugees fleeing poverty and oppression, but they are also Americans moving from Coast to Coast, small towns to cities, exchanging one partner to another, in search of a dream that always seems to elude them. A feeling of dislocation, displacement and rootlessness is a heavy price they must pay for the infinite freedom and possibilities that America offers. Everyone in Jasmine appears to be reeling from the speed of changes overpowering them.

An identity transforms, starts for Jasmine when the unexpected and cruel killing of her husband by the group of terrorists. She decides to fulfill his vision and visit the USA. Bred in traditions of rural India, her mission now is to reach a university in Florida, lie down on his new, unworn suit, and commit Sati. One can explain her decision only by seeing the kind of culture in which she was raised. As a baby girl, she is choked to death so that her parents can avoid later constraints of marriage and dowry. Afterward, she finds the sheltered life of widows unbearable; she sees her friend commit Sati rather than prefer to live as a widow in rural Punjab. In that concern, it is hardly surprising that she is willing to journey to America at any price on a bogus passport, with underworld traveling companions, raped by a scarred stranger in an unknown mo-

tel, etc. Next, she takes on the terror from Kali, freezing her tongue to allow blood to ooze out; she kills him in a demoniac way. Then she sets out to encounter the world and the land of her dreams.

2. Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee, through this affirmative novel, presents Jasmine as a Phoenix who rises from her ashes. Jasmine can face all challenges, whether it is killing a mad dog in Hasnapur, or travelling round the world as an illegal immigrant, being repeatedly raped, without suffering any bad consequences she calmly takes on a new name for each role. In this novel the womanhood has been depicted not as an incarnation of weakness but as a personification of strength. Finally, she becomes the independent woman who decides to live with the man whom she loves. The freedom of choice gives her new assertion and definition to her inner self and discloses the fact that she is a great fighter, which is an incarnation of her inner self. A survivor, a fighter and an adaptor, Jyoti is a struggler all through her journey. The feeling of displacement ends and Jasmine ultimately settles down as an independent American girl from a docile village girl which reflects the literary exuberance of the great writer Bharati Mukherjee.

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