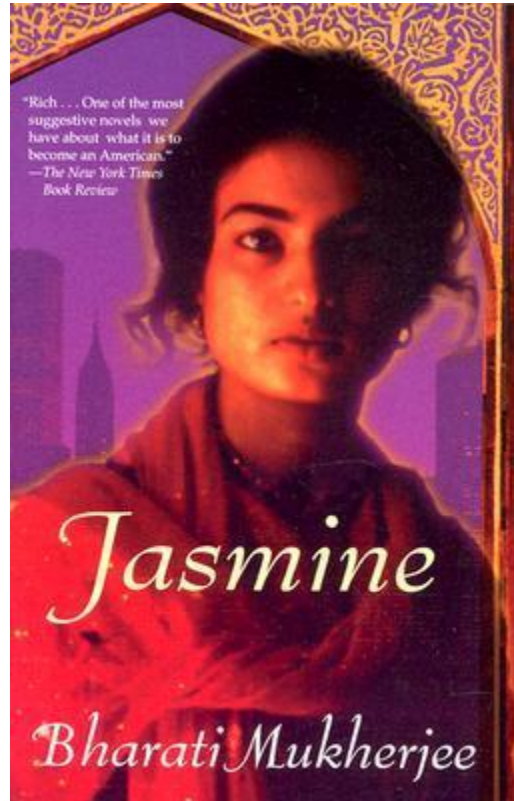


New Image of Woman in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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Introduction

Indian novels depict Indian life and culture and it resembles the problems generated by individual's life and it is determined by the society. In this way Indian novels reflect typical Indian feminine sensibility and their emotional propensities. These types of themes can be easily identified in works of immigrant writers of Indian English. Bharati Mukherjee's novels deal with the problem of female subjugation and give a new identity to the women of modern times. Self-empowerment is essential for a human being. Here she stresses on women empowerment through the character Jasmine. This paper tries to highlight how Bharati portrays Jasmine as the new age of woman who adopts the new lifestyle in an alien country.

Bharati Mukherjee

Born and brought up in a wealthy family, Bharati Mukherjee is a well-known immigrant writer. She was born on July 27, 1940 in India and moved to Britain in 1947 with her family. She got married to Clark Blaise and moved to Canada. She came to the US and became a naturalized US citizen in 1988. Some of her notable works are *The Desirable Daughters*, *Jasmine*, *Wife*, *The Tree Bride* and *The Tiger's Daughter* etc. She deals with the contemporary women's struggle to define herself in cross cultural crisis in her novels.

Self-Empowerment of Jasmine

Jasmine is a story of a strong-willed girl who crosses many obstacles and never gives up at any circumstance. Throughout the course of the novel, the title character's identity along with her name changes again and again from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to Jazzy, Jazzy to Jase and Jase to Jane. Jasmine is the narrator of the novel was born in 1965 in a rural Indian village called Hasnapur. She is different from other village girls in her thought. She marries Prakash who gave her a new name Jasmine by saying that, "*You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume*".

Soon Prakash dies in a bomb blast and Jasmine plans to go to America which was a dream of her husband. She says, "*A village girl, going alone to America, without a job, husband or papers ... I had sworn before God. A matter of duty and honor, I dared not tell my mother*". This shows that she is not a normal village girl but a self-willed. She has a tremendous will power to go to America alone. She moves to America on a forged passport but she is raped by a Captain of a ship, Half face. Since she is resolute enough she doesn't kill herself instead she kills the Captain and her Indian clothes and begins a new life in America.

She takes the identity of Jazzy when she stays in Lillian Gordon's home. She tries to come out her old identity of Jasmine a widow. "*Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes*" gives her a new identity of an American with such a resolution. She decides to move to Vadhera household. The strong urge in her to re-invent herself and her eagerness for independence and self-reliance made her life difficult at the Vadhera household. She finds of losing herself in a superficial rituals and adherence there. She takes green card with the help of Vadhera and moves to New York.

Jasmine takes on a new identity and gets a job as a baby-sitter in the house of Taylor and Wylie Hayes. While living in the Hayes she begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture. Here we could find out a great upliftment in the character of Jasmine a girl who came to the US to commit sati on her husband's suit and the present Jase in the Taylor's household.

"Taylor didn't want to change me... I changed because I wanted to".

Here she asserts her willingness to change or empower herself and be part of America. She has such a strength and capabilities. She takes in everything with so much enthusiasm. This can be considered as Jasmine's rebirth in a way, where she becomes a more daring self, ready to face the umpteen challenges and roles that lay ahead of her. She obtains yet another identity when she leaves her role as a caregiver and moves to Iowa to become the common-law wife of

Bud Ripplemayer, a banker and mother to their adopted son and later on becomes pregnant with Bud's child. She enjoys her new liberated self and allows her a part of the American society.

The protagonist Jasmine leaves her country to fulfill her wishes. She begins to search for self-independence. Though the astrologer predicts about her widowhood and exile in an early age she refuses to believe on it and always tries to raise her above all the false beliefs and superstition. When she is New York she expresses her survival skill in an alien country. "I wanted to become a person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful"

Conclusion

Human life has many obstacles and odds. Only some of them emerge as survivors whereas some of them surrender to fate. Here, Jasmine displays courage and the ability to survive in her various identities. She discovers more and more of herself in the journey of multiple identities. She approaches life in a positive tone and leads a successful life. She creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values.

Though Jasmine seeks to distance herself from cultural expectations and tradition the possibility of independence and agency exist in reality. Throughout the novel, Jasmine experiences enormous situations which bring out the violence and mental trauma in her. She not only faces physical violence, but also mental violence that forces her to be born as a different person in various phases of her life. The progression of Jasmine from one stage of evolution to the other stage of life is portrayed as a courageous character.

Works Cited

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