



## **Migration and Identity Transformation in Bharati Mukherjee's Novel *Jasmine***

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** *This research article exposes the aspects of diaspora writings. Diasporic Literature or immigrant literature is generally referred to the literary work done by immigrants. Migration has become a universal phenomenon in GLOBALIZATION. Immigrants are those people who come to live permanently in a foreign land and play a significant role in this process. A diaspora is a group of people who are living away from their original homeland and share common experiences. There is a significant place for diasporic Indian English fiction in portraying mainly the Indian diaspora in a wide Span.*

**Methodology/Approach:** *Through this novel Jasmine, Bharati Mukherjee explores the feminist consciousness. In the novel, Bharati Mukherjee employs a*

women-centered approach that deals with the experience and situation of the protagonist.

**Outcome:** *Diasporic literature focuses Mainly on themes like discrimination, cultural shock and reverse Cultural shock, problems in adjustment and assimilation, orientalism, Identity crisis, alienation and displacement, dilemma, depression, hybridity, and generational gap. Manifestations of Diaspora in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine" attempts to reveal a distinctive approach to the expatriate hood as an ethereal experience of exile and explores manifestations of diaspora through the protagonist's search for identity and transformation in the novel Jasmine. Diasporic Indian English fiction is an important genre depicting the experiences and mentalities of the Indian diaspora in a broad sense. It makes space for discussions about Indian immigrants and offers emotional security to that particular diaspora.*

**Conclusion:** *Being the representatives of the Indian Diaspora, diasporic female Indian writers are successful in furthermore, diasporic Indian English fiction keeps their writers linked with India and the entire world. Identity and transformation in Bharati Mukherjee's novel 'Jasmine' explore diasporic manifestation. Diasporic Indian English literature in the Universal diasporic literature has gained much credit during the last few decades.*

**Keywords:** Identity, Alienation, Dilemma, Transformation, Settle down.

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Bharati Mukherjee's experiences first in Canada and then in the U.S. have colored the perceptions of her characters. As mentioned by Ashalata Kulakarani, Latha Rengachari in her article *Debating Expatriate women's writing* has said that:

In their aim at self-definition and the expression of their expatriate experiences, women from 1970s onwards chose to use literature. Literature became a means of establishing autonomous selfhood. Third-world women sought to find words and forms to fit their experiences and have chosen narrative strategies like the autobiography and the quest novel to do so. They use the autobiography to give shape to an identity grounded in these diverse experiences of expatriation and self-definition (Kulkarni 68).

*Jasmine* was written after Bharati Mukherjee migrated to the U. S. And hence reveals a more positive approach to the problem of immigration. The protagonist, *Jasmine* comprises the phase of immigration of Bharati Mukherjee. The novel came in 1989. Bharati Mukherjee begins with an expatriate's uprooted identity in the early 70s, but her creative faculty explored the transitional dilemma of characters in the early 80s. In *Jasmine* 1989, Mukherjee tries to disentangle the complicated layers of cross-cultural reality through a series of adventures that the heroine undertakes during her odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York, and Iowa. Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of a person piqued by a depressing sense of isolation all around. The protagonist of Hasnapur in Punjab. Jyoti was born in the feudal village of Punjab. An astrologer told a prophecy about her 'widowhood and exile.' She does not believe in the prevalent conviction that, "*village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go*" (*JASMINE-P.46*) to exhibit the force of her belief she refuses to marry the widower selected by her grandmother and eventually ends up marrying Prakash Vij in a court in law. She is renamed *Jasmine* after her marriage to

Prakash. Prakash wishes her to become a modern city woman and he aids her in her conversion from “Jyoti” to “*Jasmine*”. She both perceives herself as and eventually becomes the figure that Prakash desires to create. Here Mukherjee is depicting identity formation as a multifaceted process that is dependent not solely upon the agency of the individual, but also upon the surrounding milieu. Her renaming is a sign of her initial migration away from traditional India. *Jasmine*’s transformation from Jyoti to Jane had its scars and stresses. Jyoti and *Jasmine* are two separate selves, yet *Jasmine* finds herself occupying both identities. Suddenly Prakash is murdered and *Jasmine* immigrates to America all alone to accomplish their dreams of Prakash. Upon her arrival in Florida, she meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and his discourteous treatment gives her, her first taste of American ethnic categorization. Half-Face sees her only as a sexual being and after the rape, *Jasmine* finds that she cannot run away from this new perception of her identity. Thus, she turns to aggression to express the conflict 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 toward a new life, she tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and stop thinking about her past:

All identities are resolved into one and *Jasmine* becomes a metaphor for that type of Indianans, which has through the ages welcomed and absorbed within itself all that is fine and decent in every country, every religion, culture of the world (Basu 7).

The novel *Jasmine* is an all-inclusive reworking of the short story bearing the same title [The Middlemen and Other Stories] in Bharati Mukherjee's short stories collection. In the short story *Jasmine*, the young girl arrives in the U. S. From Trinidad, and without any second thought, she almost in her strides, as it were, slips into the new role the young girl finds herself transplanted in a new world that offers limitless opportunities for an individual and easily adapts herself to the new world though it does involve some uneasy compromises. Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* depicts the American society where people and their relationships are always in motion.

*Jasmine* may be epitomized as a rebel, an adopter, and also a survivor. Her confidence is revealed in this statement. – “*There are no Harmless, compassionate ways to remark oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams (Jasmine 29).*” *Jasmine* dares to transform her dreams into reality. This not only boosts the immense confidence of women but it also serves as an energy for women who wish to be liberated from the shackles of age, and old dogmas. ‘We assume the shifting images of *Jasmine* as the life of a woman engaged in a quest of values, she confides in. Bharathi Mukherjee celebrates these values as she drifts from one identity to another. In other words, she celebrates the images of her multiple identities. In this way, Bharati Mukherjee recounts the lives of the illegal aliens, whose brave faces, the worst humiliations and sufferings in a new world. Through her character, the novelist underlines the propensity to the spiritual selfish nature of the character besides craziness for American culture. Her marriage with Du is evidence that she imbibes the spirit of American Culture. Thus, she transforms from an Indian image of women to an American new image of a woman. The juxtaposition of the twin themes of assimilation and resistance explains the peculiar rhythmic fluctuation between acceptance and rejection, inclusion and exclusion, and

happiness and suffering that is characteristic of Diaspora Thematic Structures. *Jasmine* is transformed by fulfilling her dream with her immigrant experience. The life of an immigrant is a series of reincarnations. A person lives through several lives in a single lifetime. This truth discloses the condition of Bharathi Mukherjee as well as that of '*Jasmine*'. As Mukherjee confides in an interview:

I have been murdered and reborn at least three times, the very correct young woman I was trained to be, and was very happy being, is very different from the politicized, shrill civil rights activist I was in Canada, and from the urgent writer that I have become in the last few years in the United States (Connel, Jessi and Tom 18).

Being the representatives of the Indian diaspora, diasporic female Indian writers are successful in addressing the readers of Indian English literature in a sensitive, unpretentious style while carrying a sense of the universal experience of immigration. Furthermore, diasporic Indian English fiction keeps their writers linked with India and the entire world Metamorphosis as a precondition to cultural assimilation with each new address. Whenever she acquires a new man, she earns a new name.

Jasmine symbolizes love and epitomizes courage and Jane stands for cunning. Bharathi Mukherjee created an Innocent child-like character Jyoti who transformed later into *Jasmine* with an element of love for her husband, Prakash. *Jasmine* Becomes an illegal immigrant and journeys to America. It reveals courage of *Jasmine*. She marries Du and becomes an American which exhibits her cunning and selfish nature of the character besides craziness for American culture. Her marriage With Du is evidence that she imbibes the spirit of American Culture. Thus, she transforms from an Indian image of women to an American new image of a woman. The juxtaposition of the twin themes of assimilation and

resistance explains the peculiar rhythmic fluctuation between acceptance and rejection, inclusion and exclusion, and happiness and suffering that is characteristic of Diaspora Thematic Structures. Jasmine is transformed by fulfilling her dream with her immigrant experience. Diaspora being the representatives of the Indian diaspora, diasporic female Indian writers are successful in addressing the readers of Indian English literature in a sensitive, unpretentious style while carrying a sense of the universal experience of immigration. Furthermore, diasporic Indian English fiction keeps its writers linked with India and the entire world.

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