



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-
Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

**Diasporic Concern and Quest for Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's
*Jasmine***

Sonal N. Patel

Research Scholar (Ph.D),

Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University, Patan

Dr. Manisha F. Shah (Research Guide)

Principal,

Government Arts and Science College, Harij

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 1



Abstract

This Research Paper aims to attempt the traumatic experiences and cultural perplexity of first- and second-generation immigrants, as well as to explore the depth analysis of women consciousness, self exploration, and their diaspora feelings among the male dominated society in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. Diaspora is described as any people's departure from their traditional country. The concerns of diaspora, transnationalism, hybridity, and identity crises enhance twenty first-century diasporic literature. *Jasmine* is set in the current situation and is about a young Indian girl named Jasmine in the United States. The condition of exiles, a feeling of loss, the agony of alienation, and bewilderment define Jasmine's personality as an immigrant in quest of identity in a foreign country. Jasmine, the heroine of this work, goes through various transformations during her existence in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane, and often feels separated, resulting in a condition of identity. This research paper investigates the study hypothesis, which is how the heroine, Jasmine, attempts to integrate herself into a foreign society where she gets a new distinctive self - identity.

Key Words: Diaspora, Hybridity, Identity Crisis, Alienation, Immigrants

Introduction:

Bharati Mukherjee is a well-known diasporic writer who has risen to prominence among mainstream American writers. She was an Indian-origin writer who uses Indians as characters in her work. Her novels mainly tell the stories of Indian immigrants attempting to establish themselves in a foreign nation, usually America. The majority of her books and even short stories are set in the United States. She has made a name for herself in the international literary community as a result of her contributions to Indian English literature. Her works are comparable to those of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh, V.S Naipaul and others. The pains and sufferings that persons of Indian Diaspora suffer in pursuing their ambitions are central to Mukherjee's literary work. She primarily concentrates on her diasporic female characters, their quest for identification, their traumatic experiences, and their inevitable emergence as conscience people free of the bonds that have

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 2



been forced on them. As a result, the aim of this study is to investigate the series of changes that the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* goes through as an illegal immigrant to America, as well as her regeneration after several changes with disintegration.

Her most notable compositions express not just her pride in her Indian background, but also her pleasure in embracing America. Her work has received widespread acclaim for depicting diaspora experiences, particularly those of the South Asian Diaspora in North America. In her work, she uses her own experiences to demonstrate how American culture is evolving. She refers to herself as an hyphenated American, as opposed to the hyphenated Indian-American title: "I maintain that I am an American writer of Indian origin, not because I'm ashamed of my past, not because I'm betraying or distorting my past, but because my whole adult life has been lived here, and I write about the people who are immigrants going through the process of making a home here... I write in the tradition of immigrant experience rather than nostalgia and expatriation. That is very important. I am saying that the luxury of being a U.S. citizen for me is that I can define myself in terms of things like my politics, my sexual orientation or my education. My affiliation with readers should be on the basis of what they want to read, not in terms of my ethnicity or my race."

Research Methodology:

This research paper will cover a perspective of both – feminine issues like quest for identity and Indian Diaspora. The method employed for the purpose tends to be critical and analytical. The researcher has employed the method of intensive reading and comprehension study in this research through which she wants to achieve the desired objectives in the paper.

Result and Discussion:

In her work *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee attempts to bridge the gap between "home" and "exile." As an Indian Diaspora writer, she values America's "melting pot" theme in her works. Her principal topic throughout her works is the status of Asian immigrants in the United States and Canada, with a focus on the transformations occurring in South Asian women in a

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 3



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

modern nation. The diasporic experience may be measured by how it manifests itself in one's attitude toward home and host nation. There are three factors that distinguish these mindsets from one another. One is that of the expatriate who craves for his or her own nation and has a bad attitude toward the host country. The 'dual diaspora' is distinguished by scattered and built nostalgia and some approval of one. For a long time, the diasporic has a tough view and a sense of nostalgia. This category includes Bharati Mukherjee's books.

Jasmine, the protagonist and narrator of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, was born in a small Indian region called Hasnapur about 1965. She relates her narrative as a pregnant twenty-four-year-old living in Iowa with her disabled boyfriend, Bud Ripplemeyer. In Iowa, it takes two months to relay the most recent trends. During that period, Jasmine also recounts biographical events that occurred between her Punjabi birth and her American adulthood. These previous biographical events shape the activity in Iowa. Her journey takes her to five different locations, two murders, at least one rape, a beheading, a suicide, and three love affairs. Throughout the narrative, the title character's identity, as well as her name, shifts and shifts: from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jassy to Jase to Jane. Jasmine travels from Hasnapur, Punjab, to Fowlers Key, Florida, New York, to Manhattan, to Baden, Iowa, and eventually to California as the book concludes.

When a person enters a foreign country, he is an outsider in a no-land, man's and he must fight hard for survival while overcoming these new sensations of nostalgia. As a social animal, man need a home, the affection of family members, and the acceptance of society. But when he arrives in a strange nation, he undergoes a complete makeover. He loses his feeling of belonging and experiences uncertainty and an identity crisis. Gradually, he adapts to the new ways of life and develops a bond with the environment of his adoptive nation. For the short being, he forgets his own original culture. When he returns to his original continent, however, he discovers that it has been completely transformed, and he once again finds himself an alien in his own civilization. This leads to an identity issue at home and once again.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 4



To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand... it

is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand. (Taylor,115)

Jasmine's voyage becomes a story about moral bravery, self-awareness, and self-assertion. Jyoti, uprooted from her own India, does her best to establish herself as an "immigrant" into the new and foreign culture, culminating in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man - Bud. Jasmine oscillates between the past and the present, striving to reconcile two worlds, one of "nativity" and the other of "immigrant." Jyoti comes to America from an oppressed and rural family in India in pursuit of a more productive life and to achieve the goals of her husband, Prakash, who renames her "Jasmine." As a result, she embarks on her trek westward and her search for a new self. When she meets the intelligent Taylor, who nicknames her Jase, she undergoes her first change from a faithful Hindu wife, and then moves on to become Bud's "Jane."

Jasmine settles with Taylor and Wylie, where she gets a new name, Jase. She begins to love her new life and have a better understanding of American society. She subsequently relocates to Iowa in search of her "American boyfriend," Bud, who has also given her the name Jane. She also adopts a kid named Du, with whom she has the strongest bond. Du is also a Vietnamese immigrant.

"I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness". Hereby she wants to marry Taylor over Bud. She breaks the shell of traditional Indian woman and chooses a satisfied way. She moves away with Taylor as a true American. Jasmine exposes her characters as "I have had a hundred for each of the women I have been, Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jaze, Bud for Jane, and half face for Kali". The villagers say when a clay pitcher breaks, you see that the air inside is the same as outside. We are just shells of the same absolute. (*Jasmine*, 15)

Jasmine, the character in Jasmine is exile, expatriate, wanderer, and individual on the move, shedding past lives as effortlessly as a snake sheds its skin. She is Third World refugee fleeing poverty and injustice, but she is also American going from coast to coast, from small

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
"INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION"

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 5



villages to metropolis, switching partners in quest of a dream that never seems to come true. A sense of dislocation, displacement, and rootlessness is a high price to pay for the limitless freedom and opportunities that America provides. Jasmine looks to be reeling from the rapid pace of change that is overwhelming her.

Jasmine survives and partially survives throughout the story as she undertakes a difficult trip and changes her names and identities. It represents her shedding of her old self and being reborn over and over. An astrologer predicted in her childhood that she would become a widow and go into exile. His prophecy has left an everlasting imprint on her mind that she would be a widow. Throughout the story, it produces a sense of mental instability.

“No”, I shouted. “You are a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds”

(*Jasmine*,3)

Jyoti marries Prakash, an engineer, despite her unpleasant experience and unsettled psyche. She carries on with her married life, but with scepticism. She is perplexed by traditions, rituals, and beliefs. Prakash regards Jyoti as a traditional rural girl. Prakash gives her the name 'Jasmine.' She accepts easily, seeking and hoping for a new identity, a new life. Altering her name meant changing her future, according to Jyoti. It may also be seen as her desire to give up her actual self in order to avoid becoming a widow, as indicated by the astrologer earlier.

Jyoti, the native, innocent girl, transforms into Jasmine, an impertinent, uncaring personality. Jyoti, who is suffering from mental blockage and has lost confidence and joy about being alive, shows quirky qualities such as cutting her tongue, letting the blood run down, acting as Goddess Kali, the remover of evil, and wanting to murder the guy who has abused her. Such behaviour is only found in those who are extremely neurotic and psychologically disturbed. Jyoti walks again after murdering him, looking for her life. Jyoti resolves to rise again, as Robert Browning stated, "my sun sets to rise again." As Alliya Parveen correctly points out, To realize their ambitions and to experience a sense of liberation from their old , social,

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
“INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION”

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 6



traditional mores, the characters of her stories undergo deep emotional, mental, and physical sufferings.(147)

Conclusion:

Throughout the narrative, as the characters observe their ethnicity and gender through fresh and varied lenses, they come to realise that the concept of a distinct identity is a myth, and the truth of the diasporic concern is the indeterminate diversity. This multiplicity becomes a significant plight for the characters, because as their different consciousnesses contradict each other, the characters are left unsure of the nature of their identities, unsure of where they fit in the Mukherjee's characters with different socio-cultural experiences relate to a process involving complex negotiation and exchange. Mukherjee is constantly concerned that the new identity not be marginalised or suppressed by any culture. To prevent such situations, she imbues her characters with traits such as individuality, freedom, strength, and decisiveness. Duality and struggle are not exclusive to immigrant life in America. Mukherjee's female protagonists are raised in a culture that cultivates such attitudes in them from infancy. Because of British colonialism, the breaking down of language and cultural barriers begins early.



References:

- 1 Agarwal Beena, Women Writers and Indian Diaspora, New Delhi: Authors Press 2011 web.
- 2 Anand S.K. Women Writers of Indian Diaspora. Creative Books,2010 print
- 3 Bhat Yashoda(ed)- The Image of Woman in Indian Literature. New Delhi: B.R Publishing corporation, 1993 web.
- 4 Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity.Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p.115
- 5 Ganesan, Sankar & Soundararajan, R. (2017). IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AND SELF-IDENTITY IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S JASMINE: A STUDY. Scholedge International Journal of Multidisciplinary & Allied Studies ISSN 2394-336X. 4. 10. 10.19085/journal. sijmas040201.
- 6 Ms.S. Alliya Parveen, Ms. Lakshmi Balaji, Some Perspectives in Indian Writing in English. Chennai.2005. 348.
- 7 Mukherjee, Bharathi. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove press, 1989. Print.
- 8 <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/11/mukherjee-bharati/>
- 9 “An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee - Iowa Research Online”, Iowa Review, p.18

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

An International Multidisciplinary Multilingual E-Conference on
“INTERROGATING THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT: A 360 DEGREE
INVESTIGATION”

Special Issue - Volume.6 Issue 6, June – 2021

Page No. 8