
Multicultural Identity Crisis in the Bharati Mukherjee's Novel *Jasmine*

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Abstract

This paper intends to explore the transformations with disintegration literary pieces of Bharati Mukherjee has gained a milestone as she brings out the segregation experienced by the immigrants of South Asian Countries. Through her novels, she voices her personal life experiences to show the reconstructing shape of American Society. She centrally locates her emphasis on the women characters their struggle for identity, their harsh experiences and their final emergence as the self- assertive, self opinioned individuals free from fear imposed on them. The list of Diasporic writer is too long and the root of Diaspora is so deep. Through the novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee focuses the multicultural identity of a woman. This paper is an effort to portray the bitter experiences of homelessness, displacement, oppression and exploitation of protagonist Jasmine.

Keywords- Diaspora, Homelessness, Identity-crisis, Displacement

The term Diaspora refers to the scattered religion or ethical groups away from their home land either forced or voluntary. The term Diaspora originated from the dispersal of Jews as they were forced into exile to Babylonia. However in today's world it is mean that any community which is spread in other country for quenching their desires of living a quality life. Her husband Prakash got killed in a bomb blast which was heartbroken news for jasmine at the age of seventeen.

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Jasmine hears Prakash's voice which motivates her from every corner of room "there is no dying, there is only as ascending or a descending, a moving on to other planes. Don't crawl back to Hasanpur and feudalism that Jyoti is dead" (*Jasmine* 86). She wants to get rid of Indian feudalism so she goes to New York with a new and different identity which was completely from first one.

Feminism is not only movement it is a belief that all social, economic, political and educational rights has to be equal for a woman in this patriarchal set up all these changes cannot be brought up by raising slogans only but the feminism should bring changes in the approach of this society for woman. Feminism largely arose in the western world against the traditional norms. Reports about the subjugation of woman is found to present in every corner present writing the novel *Jasmine* depicts the journey of a woman from fearful to fearless 'Jasmine' novel is the well depiction of Diasporic literature along with streaks of feminism. How a typical middle class Indian woman transforms into an independent, self opinioned American woman. Diasporic works are found to be correlated with auto ethnography a writing wherein an author is triggered by consciousness connecting the personal to cultural aspects the moment an immigrant lands into a culturally different nation he experiences the differences, absence of love and adjustment issues. Bharati Mukherjee is an Indo-American writer and professor emirate in the Department of English at California University. *Jasmine* is novel written by Bharati Mukherjee, set in the 1980s novel is the manifestation of a young Indian woman who breaks off all the chains of Patriarchy and represents herself as the symbol of strength. Author herself owns an experience of dislocation and displacement in her life helping in record the immigrant's experience in the novel *Jasmine*. V.S. Naipaul, Jumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie and Anjana Appaachana they all are related to Diasporic literature and their works also talks about multicultural identity crisis. In any country and for any human being 'identity' is a big issue because it is personal as well as social also. Without any identity a person is nothing. Bharti Mukherjee's novels mostly deal the issues of identity crisis, sense of belonging and feeling of alienation. The main protagonist of novel *Jasmine* faces a lot of cross- cultural problems but she never give up. Cultural crisis is such a big issue in Bharati Mukherjee's life also that's why she

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expressed her feelings of alienation, adaptation of culture and custom through her novel Jasmine. Jasmine different types name like Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane shows cross- cultural identity. As a protagonist Jasmine starts her life journey from a very small village in India to the abroad like US. Her life journey is full of tragic accidents like murder, rape and illicit relationships. According to Jasmine, Prakash is different from others he wants Jasmine to come out fear and he said, “You are small and sweet heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume” (*Jasmine 77*). Prakash motivates Jyoti to learn English and he also gives a new identity and new life to Jasmine. “He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I’d been in Hasanpur and makes me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine... Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities” (*Jasmine 77*).

Jasmine found to be based on the prior short story in the middleman and other stories narrates the story of a seventeen year old girl who became widow by fate after her husband’s brutal assassination in the bomb blast. Her conscious was shaken after the mishap. She took longer span of time emerge as victorious from this nightmare, darkest phase of life. In India man is always considered to be the defining term for a woman. A woman needs a shade of man to show identity. Still in 2020 the identity of woman is nowhere. She has to keep the name of man before herself. She would be complete with a man. If a woman bears up an umbrella term of woman she is considered as a virtue, epitome for the Indian male dominated set up protagonist Jasmine and her husband planned to move to Florida but his sudden demise shattered her dreams. But Jasmine as a phoenix arises from the ashes again and bravely plans her new journey all alone. She feels that she is self- sufficient. In her path towards exploring her own self bears up thousand of hurdles but she never loses her courage takes forward step as life is always there to remain unpredictable time has power to blow up any one without giving any notice before.

The novel originates with jasmine’s re narration of her childhood phase. She remembers how an astrologer predicted her future as a widow facing the exile from the core of the heart. The novel is presented in the first person point of view in a non linear style. Jyoti the protagonist of Jasmine being “the fifth daughter seventh of nine children” is strangled to death by her grandmother. She becomes a victim of mean thought process which still considers a girl child as

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the burden upon family. A woman needs an umbrella term of man whose shade defines her as his own possession. She is a survivor and fighter by birth. Jasmine was not happy to live as a sati or widow in white sari so she says, “I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like. To them, I was a widow who should show a proper modesty of appearance and attitude” (*Jasmine* 145). Jasmine fights back against the infanticide only to become a rebellious woman of different actions and identity. Going against the societal norms she chooses Prakash Vijn a modern, intelligent and handsome young man who renames her as Jasmine. Renaming is to be continued she becomes as the new version of herself every time. Jasmine is all about the adventurous journey and personal development of a young woman and her attempt to assimilate American culture. She caught between two world identity the first one is “Nativity” and the second one was an “Immigrant”. Jasmine is full of positivity and she wants to become a doctor as she says “I want to be a doctor and set up my own clinic in a big town” (*Jasmine* 62). Then story moves one step further with the twenty four year old Jasmine conceived and staying in Baden, Iowa .She lives with her older love the paralyzed stricken banker Bud Ripplemayer. They live in a small home along with their adopted Vietnamese son Du. Bud dumped his ex-wife Karen for Jasmine. In the narrative structure the story brings out the smaller flashbacks from her life. She herself is lost in the memories of Hasanpur, Punjab India. She was fondly name as Jyoti in her village she was eager to learn new things of life. Her teacher advocates education but her family takes a firm stands that she should find a good husband. Jasmine gets married to Prakash but he got killed in terrorist bomb blast she honors’ her husband’s dream and in order to fulfill his dream she decided to go to America with a forged visa. The captain of the trawler, Half- face takes her to the local motel and rapes her who had “Lost an eye and ear and most of his in a paddy field in Vietnam” (*Jasmine* 104). Jasmine firms for taking revenge by killing captain not herself. As she wonders in Florida and meets Lilian Gordan who assists undocumented female immigrants. She takes help from the daughter of Lilian Gordan and with the help of Lillian’s daughter. Jasmine rescues a job as a nanny for Taylor and Wylie Hayes’ daughter Duff Jasmine gets the new name “Jane” by Taylor. This is the step of Jasmine’s life which shows remarkable transformation in herself. She gets better treatment as a professional not as a servant. Jasmine

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continuous to be nanny of Duff and comes to know about the interest of Taylor in her. But she recognizes a hot dog vendor Sukhwinder who eloped in terrorist attack panicked for herself she, Taylor and Duff run away to Iowa.

New name, new venture new man enters into her life again she has to undergo the transformation and emerges as Jane by Bud. It is one more burden of guilt that she takes upon her shoulders along with Prakash's death Jasmine's life in Iowa revolves around frustrations with an attitude to fit into the love –hate relationship with Karen. Du the adopted son of Bud encourages Jasmine to pursue her heart. In the mean while she receives post cards from Taylor as a symbol of love who heads to Iowa with Duff to visit her. When Taylor and Duff arrive at the door of jasmine, she herself realizes that she is fond of Bud Ripplemayer but in reality she finds no lover for him she decides at a moment to leaves Bud she takes her future in her own hands turndown the forecast of astrologer decides to spent her rest of life with Taylor and never ever turns back. It is well mentioned in the novel Jasmine that is highly independent and self opinioned women are not accepted so jasmine has also faced the same issue but she is able to experience a taste of freedom with educational opportunities. Every action has some risk in order to attain freedom. She moves to America with forged passport sees several phases of life either gloomy or bright but she never ever gets discouraged moves ahead with velour and considers as a journey not any confinements by which bar a life of a woman. Jasmine thrills after taking full autonomy of her life "Jasmine" is the remarkable literary work in the Diasporic writings which shows the experience of Jasmine the culturally different nation. The approach of English people in accepting India strata that is always considered to be inferior, uneducated, unethical, and backward. Jasmine's search for identity is much more internally driven. As Jasmine goes from name to name she tries on a variety of ways of being a woman, a more liberated Indian wife with Prakash and a pair in seemingly idyllic family with the Hayeses and a modern woman with a Job at a bank and an adopted child with Bud. "We murder who we are so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams" Jasmine passes on this comment on herself only when she is talking with Du's teacher she is not able to understand the mindset of these white people who have problems with immigrants. They need to have a clear picture in their mind that every immigrant has to

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leave his culture identity in order to assimilate new identity, culture. Why this subtle racism is existing in the minds of European nations “Calamity Jane, Jane as in Jane Russell not Jane as in plain Jane. But plain Jane is all I want to be plain Jane is a role like another”(JASMINE 26). This statement of Jane depicts some streaks of her acceptance and restlessness. Here she is Bud’s partner mother of an unborn child but why she wants this new chapter of her life as an uneventful.

Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee Presents Jasmine as phoenix who rises from her ashes. She can face all challenges either it is killing a mad dog in Hasanpur or exploring all over the world as an illegal immigrant. In this novel the protagonist is not presented as an incarnation of weakness but represents strength. Author Bharati Mukherjee has tried to carve out image of third world countries immigrants who try to establish themselves in the culturally different background Jasmine is one of those survivors, who fights with every odd comes out to be an epitome of modern, independent woman who never believes to rot in patriarchy norms. Jasmine creates a new world with new ideas, values, opinions, beliefs constantly unmarking her past. She keeps on trying to establish herself in a new cultural identity by integrating new desires.

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