

JASMINE: A SELF-EXPLANATORY WOMEN PROTAGONIST IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S JASMINE

¹Dr.P.Jeyappriya

ABSTRACT -- *Bharati Mukherjee is one of the accomplished Diasporic writers. Her writing focuses mainly on women's suppression, struggle to overcome the problems and attempt to attain identification. In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural clashes through a series of adventures in which the protagonist takes during her odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. *Jasmine* is the one of the most celebrated novels of the Mukherjee which represents a powerful woman who refuses to live with others. In fact this article is based on the assumption that "education" can make women more intelligent and comprehend things in a better fashion. *Jasmine* knowledge gives her the confident to face all the problems in life. It only makes her to get mingle with American life style. The knowledge of the outer makes to accept the transformation she has faced in her life without any guilty consciousness.*

Keywords-- *A Self-explanatory Women Protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine**

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian English literature is an honourable endeavour to manifest the ever rare gems of Indian Writing in English from being a singular and deviant, rather moderate native flare-up of geniuses, Indian Writing has turned out to be an advanced form of Indian culture and voice in which India converses consistently. Indian writers-poets, novelists, essayists and dramatists have been making crucial and perceptible contribution to literature. Since Pre Independence period, the past few years have witnessed a colossal prospering and flourishing of Indian Writing in the global market.

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the accomplished Diasporic writers. Her writing focuses mainly on women's suppression, struggle to overcome the problems and attempt to attain identification. In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural clashes through a series of adventures in which the protagonist takes during her odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. *Jasmine* is the one of the most celebrated novels of the Mukherjee which represents a powerful woman who refuses to live with others.

Education has been an important aspect of human beings. It is especially so with women because they can then widen their knowledge. It is obvious that without the struggle for education in early nineteenth century we would not have had Indian English women's fiction at all.

According to K.A Kunjakkan:

¹Dr. P. Jeyappriya, Associate Professor and Head, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Mother Teresa Women's Univeristy, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, priyaa1975@gmail.com

More education gives more intelligence, reasoning power, more I.Q., and such an individual is able to understand and comprehend things around them. They acquire an inquisitive mind and thus able to question things. This is however opposed to Indian view of life, where women are expected to be obedient, disciplined, submissive, chaste and docile. All these womanly qualities are believed to evaporated(sic) on attaining excess education by women. The feminists say that this misunderstanding is due to the popular notion that women are to be a wife and a mother. Nothing more (pp-6)

II. RESULT

Most of the people will strongly agree with Kunjakkan view about education giving more intelligence, reasoning power, more I.Q., and an ability to comprehend things but they do not agree with the later part of Kunjakkan's ideas about women being expected to be obedient submissive, and docile. In fact this article is based on the assumption that "education" can make women more intelligent and comprehend things in a better fashion. Jasmine knowledge gives her the confidence to face all the problems in life. It only makes her to get mingle with American life style. The knowledge of the outer makes to accept the transformation she has faced in her life without any guilty consciousness.

The novel *Jasmine* speaks about an Indian immigrant who encounters the new world and her gradual transformation which thoroughly imbibes the new culture. When the search of survival comes, human beings prefer to survive and for that sometimes migration is the better solution. Jasmine's family was one of them. Her family had to leave Lahore and found hope for better future in Hasnapur, a small village of Punjab. This was the incident and main theme of migration in the novel.

Jyoti alic Jasmine is born in a remote village, where women are marginalized and there is no room for girl's education during those days. But Jasmine has fascination towards Education and English language since her childhood. After attaining marriageable age, she falls in love with voice (conversation in English) of Prakash Vijh, who is one of her brother's friend and marries him. Later she migrates to city. He is a technical student and has a passion to pursue higher studies. When Prakash shows brochures of Florida International Institute of Technology, Jasmine is surprised to know how diversified America is. He encourages her to read and understand technical books and improve her knowledge in that area.

The impact slowly makes her to become a confident woman with the constant support by her husband and Jasmine is eagerly waiting to go abroad because of the seeds of passion for America cultivated by Prakash. Suddenly an unexpected movement has taken place in Jasmine's life to shatter the aspirations of the newlywed couple. Unfortunately her husband was killed in Khalistan riots while trying to protect her. Jasmine becomes widow at the age of seventeen. She detests to lead the life of husbandless woman as they are treated in India with the contempt as they are considered to be bad omen. "Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine, and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash". (JS 97) Now, Jasmine has set journey to America to fulfill a long much-loved dream of her husband by arranging illegal documents with the help of her brothers. The daring of the young rustic girl in understanding this hazardous trip to abroad is a measure of her innate affinity to the American ideal of fearless enterprise.

III. METHOD

Jasmine's image seems to be a personification of Bharati Mukherjee's concept of Americanness as an outlook on life. On her journey to the First World she encountered with hideous event, like meeting Half-Face, Captain of the ship. Half-face's nick name is Bubba which sounds like Indian and resembles Baba. She probes whether the name has any Indian origin. Half-face answers very rudely that Bubba was not an Indian name, no way.

Half-Face treats Jasmine with disrespect and disregard. He does not see Jasmine as an Indian, but rather simply as an another black person. Jasmine blindly trusts and accepts his offers to allow him accompany her which makes her to face bitter experience on her immigration. Half-Face who appears to be like a demon brutally rapes her. She pleads at him to leave her and begs him to have pity on her who is after all a widow from the Third World. But Half-Face does not listen to any of the pleading words from Jasmine. She acts like a Kali and gathers all her strength and kills him. The experience has taught her to become a rebel to survive. After murdering the evil she vows to start her own life in America. As the novel progresses Jasmine keeps on moving from one place to another for her survival.

Jasmine meets Lillian Gordon, a mentor, philosopher and guide, for all ill-legal immigrants. She consoles and provides her with a temporary home and warmth. She teaches her how to talk, walk and dress like an American. Lillian is the next figure in Jasmine's life to rename her, bequeathing upon her the westernized nickname "Jazzy", a symbol of her entrance and acceptance of American culture. She encourages her if she behaves like an American in walking and speaking so that the native people will accept Jasmine as Jazzy in the American soil.

Yet Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home, for it completely isolated from everything American. Jasmine feels as though she has simply wandered into continuation of her former teenage days and muses.

It was as though I'd never left India. After a few minutes, a station wagon driven by a lone woman followed. Fields on either side of the highway were dense with tomatoes, eggplants, and okra (still au-bergines and ladies' fingers in Masterji's English). I had travelled the world without ever leaving the familiar crops of Punjab. (JS 128)

India, however several miles away, has showed itself in the romanticized America in the dreams of Jasmine. It causes a strain between her new impression of herself as "Jazzy" and "Jasmine" she accepts the will with her past. Altogether furious about what she accepts to be static in her movement towards another life; Jasmine escalates her endeavor to isolate herself from all that is Indian by attempting to overlook her past totally. In this artificial flat of Indianness, Jasmine needs to distance her from everything Indian, everything Jyoti likes.

As Jasmine builds her life in America, she longs to forget her past and all the horrific experiences that still haunt her. She wants to imbibe American way of life in every possible way leaving her past rituals and conventions. She thinks that, experience must be forgotten, or else it will ruin one's life. Yet as hard as Jasmine may try, she inevitably finds that her past is a part of her life. She wanted to discard and abandon her past way of life and was craving for ushering in new ways of life and new identities. But unfortunately her past way of life and the native cultural conventions haunt her in spite of her strong desire for change. She ponders that she had a past which was haunting like a shadow.

The worse moment in Jasmine's life is when she met Dr. Vadhera, Professor of Prakash who helped her to get an admission in Technical Institute. Jasmine was very uncomfortable with Dr. Vadhera's family; because she was shocked to know that they are leading Indian life in America. She is so scared that she has to lead a widowed life and decided to proceed with migratory pattern and moved to New York City. Then she becomes an au pair girl to an American family with the help of Lillian Gordon's daughter. At this point Jasmine moves in with Taylor, his wife Wylie and their adopted little girl Duff, she makes yet another identity in a view of another insight of herself. While living with the Haynes family, Jasmine starts to ace the English language, consequently engaging herself to additionally suitable American culture.

IV. DICUSSSION

The Vital issue for Jasmine is to imbibe American culture and follow it scrupulously. All three names of Jyoti, Jasmine and Jazzy merge into one. Then she must be bold, confident and courage enough to face the new American cultural modes of life without any fear, regret or inhibition. She must be receptive to adopt herself for modern Ways of life which are totally different from her past ones.

Jasmine's understanding and her knowledge of her race has dramatically altered due to the impact of Haynes family on them. Gradually they lose their native identity and imbibe new cultural ways of life. Later her racial identity is likely to be changed. The companions of Taylor reveal the interest in Jasmine because she is South Asian and embodiment of new set of cultures and nations. "Educated people are interested in differences; they assume that I'm different from them exempted from being one of "them" the knife-wielding undocumentededs hiding in basements webbing furniture." (JS 33).

But Jasmine's unique racial disparity can be noticed and observed in the community of people she inhibits. But unfortunately racial identity is now subject to prejudice and bias of indiscriminate disparity of groups of people. People dwelling in the same complex transform Jasmine's perception after finding a remarkable change in her attitude and actions. Jasmine at one point in the novel says, "the other girls in the building, the other day mummies assumed that she from the islands like they were. "Most of them had children back in Jamaica or Trinidad or Santo Domingo and they assumed I did it too." (JS 34).

In this particular situation, class politics apply a great deal of influence upon the perceptions of Jasmine's race. People dwelling in the same complex transform Jasmine's perception after finding a remarkable change in her attitude and actions.

Jasmine living with Taylor becomes the fruitful period in her life. Taylor has not only encouraged her to be proficient in English but also gave emotional support. Though Taylor is married, he and Jasmine begin a rather promising romance, which Jasmine enters into cautiously, avoiding physical contact while trying to distinguish the manner in which Taylor view her sexuality. As she falls in love with him, she desires to change herself into being she believes Taylor sees her as:

The love I felt for Taylor that first day had nothing to do with sex. I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence and graceful self-absorption. I wanted to become the person thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful." (JS 171)

Jasmine feels the treatment she has received from Taylor is beyond words to explain. Their emotional support has made Jasmine into a new person. Jasmine tries to change herself and understands that her want to change for Taylor is not just superfluous, yet in addition conceived out of what she accepts to be her own want to delete her own relationship with her sexuality. Jasmine feels that it is her own interest to change herself not for Taylor. Her life undergoes a drastic and distracted conscious awareness which makes her to experience a new world. There occurs a clash of personalities in Jasmine's reaction because she has to confront her past self with the present one. The situation becomes complex and complicated by the arrival of her lover revealing a manifestation of her former identity.

In order to avoid Sukhiwinder who has killed Prakash makes her panics and also she does not want Taylor's family to be offended. She moves and meets Bud Ripple Mayer an American Banker who instantly falls in love with her. Consequently they marry and Bud renames Jasmine as Jane. Jane settles down peacefully with Bud, enjoying her financial freedom and also her new status as step mother. This time her identity is presented and started by a male figure. Bud reminds Prakash in the way in which he sees Jasmine. It is on the ground that he discovers her as an alluring sexual figure and additionally his own buddy. This situation urges Jasmine to uninhibitedly change parts from guardian to seductress.

Again a violent incident has been witnessed by Jasmine. A farmer shoots at Bud for point blank range and he becomes crippled. Here, Jasmine recalls not only Prakash but also how she has become the victim of violence during Khalistan riots. Bud varies from the majority of Jasmine's past lovers in that he is the first to see her sexuality through the viewpoint of his own orientalist dream. Bud's orientalism disappoints Jasmine. But she totally gets absorbed into American life she attains her own identity without any difficulty and impediment. The Jase of New York as retreated so that Jane may advances.

V. CONCLUSION

Jasmine has completely appropriated American culture, and in Baden nation, the group wants to make her commonplace and considers her to be acclimatized, along these lines enabling Jasmine to receive a totally new character effortlessly. The Jase of New York has now retreated with the goal that Jan may propel "I whisper the name, Jase, Jase, Jase, as if I am calling somebody I once knew".(JS 215)

Out of blue, Jasmine's racial identity is not included by method for disparities by depicting her just as she were an European and basically white, all hints features of her Indian heritage wiped away. To mention in her own words she did not have either accent or sound like an Iowan. Her voice has been changed like telephonic voice, very soothing and appeared like a voice of Northern California. At last, Jasmine's racial identity is subject upon her condition and its different tenants, and in Baden she is viewed as "practically white".

However, Jasmine cannot stay in the steady life in Baden, for she wants more adventurous, experiences and disruption, and she flourishes to join the nearness of progress in her life. The novels ends by discovering Jasmine moving to California with Taylor, uncertain of what the future will bring yet all things considered sure about her choice to clear out. Jasmine's rejection of Bud for Taylor toward the end of the novel proposes that she will make yet another personality for her new setting wherever the area might be. The feeling of development towards the

end of the novel further strengthens the idea that Jasmine's personality is everlasting developing in accordance with her environment.

For readers she may appear fickle minded and behaving according to her whims and fancies, but in reality it is forced by the circumstances of domestic life and the uncertainties that she encountered. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Mukherjee pronounces these transformations as a narrative of successful migration to America by an Indian woman who is never a subjugated and pitiable immigrant. While Mukherjee may have successfully rejected one aspect of what she considers an omnipresent image of immigration, the critical response to Jasmine reveals that even 'successful' immigrant narratives are vulnerable to pigeon-holing of other sorts.

REFERENCES

1. Armstrong, M. and Taylor, S. (2014) *Armstrong's Handbook Of Human Resource Management Practice*. 13th edn. London: Kogan Page.
2. Chaminade, B. (2007). *A Retention Checklist: How Do You Rate?* Retrieved on 11th March, 2012, from www.humanresourcesmagazine.co.au
3. Weightman, J. (2004) *Managing People*. 2nd edn. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
4. Wilson, B. T. (2003) *Innovative reward systems for the changing work place*. New York: McGraw Hill.
5. Ali, R. & Ahmed, M.S. (2009). The Impact Of Reward And Recognition Programs On Employee's Motivation and Satisfaction: An Empirical Study. *International Review of Business Research Papers*, 5, 270-279.
6. Gentry, W. A., Kuhnert, K. W., Mondore, S. P., and Page, E. E. (2007). The Influence of Supervisory-support Climate and Unemployment Rate on Part-time Employee Retention: A Multilevel Analysis. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(10), pp. 1005 - 1022.
7. Khalid, S., Irshad, M. Z., and Mahmood, B. (2012). Job Satisfaction among Academic Staff: A Comparative Analysis between Public and Private Sector Universities of Punjab, Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(1), pp. 126-136.
8. Khan, R.I., Aslam, H. D., & Lodhi, I. (2011). Compensation Management: A strategic conduit towards achieving employee retention and Job Satisfaction in Banking Sector of Pakistan. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies* ISSN, 1, 1, 2162-3058.
9. Kamal, Y., & Hanif, M. F. (2009). Pay and Job Satisfaction: A Comparative Analysis of Different Pakistani Commercial Banks, Paper presented IN 9th National Research Conference held on 25th June 2009 at SZABIST, ISLAMABAD. (2009, July 04). Retrieved October 2, 2011, from <http://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/16059/>