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Mukherjee's Jasmine*

*Ruqia Ali Al-Imad*

*Ph D student, English Deptt, Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University*

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# Diasporic Suffering and Gender Oppression in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

**Ruqia Ali Al-Imad**  
*Ph D student, English Deptt,*  
*Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University*

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## **Abstract**

The present paper represents diaporic suffering and gender oppression in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. In other word, Mukherjee expresses immigrants' bitter diasporic experiences, such as homelessness; displacement, nostalgia and identity fragmentation. Furthermore, Mukherjee presents her own struggle to assert identity throughout her autobiographical writings, first as an exile from India, then as an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States of America. On the other hand, Mukherjee asserted that a woman should not be passive and submissive in an alien land. In fact, a woman especially who immigrated should overcome all obstacles that she encountered and be confident of herself. The protagonist Jasmine encounters the pain with courage. Jasmine searches for freedom through change and flexible identities. Rather, *Jasmine* sets her texts against

the traditional rule of Indian society.

Further, Mukherjee exposes Jasmine's bitter life when Jasmine expresses that there is no difference between the complexity of both Third World strategies of survival and the liberality of First World. Rather, Jasmine has a sense of ambivalence, she becomes between patriarchal Indian culture and Western anxieties because in fact she is nationally foreign.

Moreover, the writer intends to choose this novel that is connected closely to marginalized nation because at the beginning, Indian history writers can only narrate from elitists who are somehow far away from the reality.

### **Introduction:**

The research paper is based on an analytical reading of diasporic's identity crisis in a new country. It concentrates on Indian diaspora writers, namely Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. Rather, it shows that many immigrants have maintained spiritual and emotional cultural links with their home country. In addition, it seeks to explore the ideology of colonizer's in general and British colonizer's regime rule in particular. Meanwhile, this paper seeks to re-root the feminine rights and voice womens' oppression and narrate their injustice experiences. Further, Indian women are submissive to traditional society that are against feminine rights, such as woman has to burn her self after husband's death. Therefore, women claim the equality between women and men and eliminate male domination. In other word, the expansion of British Empire has a significant role on different aspect; womens' double oppression.

Moreover, Bharati Mukherjee lived as a colonized; then a National subject in India. Later, she led a life of exile in Canada. Besides, Mukherjee's experience in Canada reveals racism.

To bridge the gap that other writers leaves in terms of her neglecting



of woman's rule towards the British colonizer. Bharati Mukherjee's fiction portrays the woman as the leading spirits, Mukherjee avoids victimization and degradation of women. However, other writers depict woman with a deep sympathetic way. Mukherjee expresses her attitude towards a feudalistic society by saying this: "Feudalism! I am a window in the war of feudalism" (JS 97). The paper is divided into two parts. Its outline is as follows:

1. Introductory Elements of the Paper,
2. A Critical Study in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*.

### **Part One: Introductory Elements of the Paper:**

The paper introduces the following:

1. **Significance of the research paper:** The paper seeks to:
  - expose the colonizer's oppression in general and British colonizers in particular;
  - re-root the feminine by women writers' voices who narrate their injustice experiences in Indian society,
  - voice the subaltern writers who expose their hard life because of political corruption,
  - expose immigrants' identity crisis in the new country who feel homelessness and exilic identity.
2. **Objectives of the Paper:** It is divided into two types; Broad Objective and Specific Objectives.
  - **Broad Objectives:** This paper intends to investigate multicultural identity crisis in the narrative of Indian diasporic writer; with special focus on immigrant's bitter experience and ideology of colonizer.

- **Specific Objectives:** Specific Objectives of this paper intends;
  - to critically examine some Indian novels with a view to clarify diaspora studies based on both identity fragmentation and identity transformation,
  - to show how many diasporic Indians have maintained spiritual and emotional cultural links with their home country as affected in the novels under study,
  - to expose the marginalization of the nations in various fields; economy, cultural and social construction,
  - to highlight the suffering of women from double colonization (society and male domination).
  
- 3. **Limitation of the Paper:** There are many Indian diasporic writers. However, this research paper is only limited to one woman writer and she has many novels. This critical study is limited to one novel, *Jasmine*. The novel consists of many themes, yet the researcher shall focus on only two themes; diasporic suffering and gender oppression.
  
- 4. **Methodology of the Paper:** This paper follows a descriptive analytical study which consists as follows;
  - 1.1. **Theoretical study:** It includes diapor literature; the political corruption of colonizers and its effects on the nations' life that lead them to immigrate to a new country. On the other hand, feminism has an important role in diaspora studies. The writers negotiates double jeopardy of woman by male and society domination. The gender approach promotes equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men, and taking responsibility to



re-address them if necessary.

## 1.2. A Critical study in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*:

This part is divided into three types as follows:

- A Brief Sketch on Diaspora,
- Diasporic identity crisis in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*,
- Gender Oppression in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*.

The current paper goes into deeper analysis of the works that have been selected to be examined in the next part.

## Part Two: A Critical study in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jamine*:

what was mentioned before, this part is divided into three types;

### 1. A Brief Sketch on Diaspora:

The paper shall humbly contribute the conceptualization of 'Diaspora'. In the past, the concept 'Diaspora' is used only in the singular, which refers to the dispersion of the Jews from Palestine during the ninth and eighth centuries. The word 'Diaspora' was capitalized. In addition, the concept of Diasporic signifies *shatat*<sup>1</sup> in Arabic. On the other hand, Said illustrates:

All Palestinians during the summer of 1982 asked themselves what in articulate urge drove Israel, having displaced Palestinians in 1948, to expel them continuously from their refugee homes and camps in Lebanon. It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel, could not tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist

1- Shatat: It means separated and scattered in different places for a long period of time.

alongside it, an intolerance constantly reinforced by the Israel hostility to the nationalism of the Palestinians, who for forty-six years have been painfully reassembling a national identity in exile (qtd. in Salhi 2).

Thus, it is believed that the Israel's displacement<sup>2</sup> is the God's punishment when Israel forces Palestinians to be exiled from their home in 1948. Further, Israel still presents a violent experience toward Palestinian country.

Moreover, the traditional notion of Diaspora indicates a certain dislocation from the normal or 'natural' place of living or a way of life. This dislocating force may be direct or coercive such as lack of opportunities for social or economic advancement. The varied motivations that underpinned movements of individuals and groups in different parts of the world make it hard to define the phenomenon with accuracy and validity across time and space.

Later, in the beginning of the 1990s, the concept is related to the study of movements of people and goods only. Nowadays, the concept 'diaspora' is used as metaphoric definition of expatriates; refugees and immigrants. It is used to describe immigrants' experience, displacement and their identity fragmentation. In other word, the idea of diaspora does not include only immigrant experiences; dislocation and loss, but also includes exile. Exile means more of a sense of loss, i.e. the immigrants become in conflict and still in quest of their own identity. They become hybridized throughout different environments; motherland and host land<sup>3</sup>.

2- Displacement: The term «displacement» literally means a change of address. However, in postcolonial literature, it is used to mean non-resident Indian writers who their societies and culture has changed.

3- Host land: a new country.



## 2. Diasporic identity crisis in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*:

Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940, as the second of three daughters of Sudhir Lal, a chemist, and Bina Mukherjee. Mukherjee's family are from an upper middle class of Hindu Brahmin family in Calcutta, India. She had the opportunity to receive excellent education in India and United States. She married a Canadian writer called Clark Blaise while at Iowa University. She immigrated to Canada with him and finally she lived in Canada. Thus she spent the hardest 14 years of her life due to racial discrimination, and then she moved to the United States with her family in 1980, where she lived as a permanent resident there.

Moreover, Mukherjee is a Third World<sup>4</sup> feminist writer. She is the major novelist of Indian Diaspora who has achieved fortunate positions within a short period. She contributes to the field of fiction writing with a special emphasis on her own diasporic experience. Mukherjee sees herself as an immigrant writer who conceptualizes the image of the immigrants. As Bhatt mentions:

Bharati Mukherjee occupies a very important place among the diasporic writers. The circumstances of her birth, upbringing, education in India, marriage to a North American and her education and career on the American continent are the indispensable contexts to understand her fiction. She is a prominent Indian American immigrant novelist (20).

On the other hand, the main protagonist in Mukherjees' novels struggle and adapt to their hard life, as Babu and Kumar elaborat:

4- Third World: It was first used in 1952 during the so-called Cold War period, by the politician and economist Alfred Sauvy, to designate those countries aligned with neither the United States nor the Soviet Union (Ashcroft et al. 212).



This is evident by Tara Banerjee in 'The Tiger's Daughter', Dimple in 'Wife', Jyothi in 'Jasmine' and Devi in 'Leave it to me', three sisters -Padma, Parvathi and Tara in 'Desirable Daughters' and Tara in 'The Tree Bride'. Bharati Mukherjee's heroines are bold and assertive. They have the strong potentiality for adaptability; they live in the firm ground of reality and accept the bitter truth of their lives (40).

Meanwhile, Mukherjee's feminist texts overlook the important categories of class and caste and how those categories interrelate to gender, ethnicity, and age both in India and in the new American. However, in the case of Mukherjee's main characters, they are Indian women from middle class. She ignores their class status and creates the assumption that every woman is granted the same possibility of upward mobility.

In other words, Mukherjee's novels expose the women's marginalization, as Baloria explains:

Women have always known to be the 'gendered subaltern'. Bharati Mukherjee has tried to create a new relationship between man and woman based on equality, non-oppression, non-exploitation so that the creative potentials of both are maximized as individuals and not gender dichotomies. The male, as a representative of the patriarchal society has at last, being jerked off the center of woman's gravitation. The woman is preparing now to be her own gravitational force, beyond the fullness of patriarchy (62-63).

Again, Shah elaborates, "Acknowledging that Mukherjee's sociological messages are molded in fiction, which is metaphorical as she herself has asserted, reveals her keen endeavor to break binaries and erase essentialist

boundaries” (87). In addition, Mukherjee's writings pay attention to the problems of women especially as immigrants. She differs from other writers in the way she deals with her heroines because her female characters suffer from double oppression; patriarchy and expatriation. Anitha adds:

So in her writings her women characters make interesting psychological studies... It also exposes the female psyche that is their silence, their resistance and their opposition to patriarchy- the horror of rape, the fear of pregnancy and a craving for male company (34).

On the other hand, Mukherjee comments on *Jasmine* that, “ I love *Jasmine*, it was a book that came straight from the heart, very intensely done, I was putting in 20 hour days. I was *Jasmine* during that period”<sup>5</sup>. Yet, Mukherjee asserts that *Jasmine* decided to get rid of this patriarchal culture and continue her journey, when she states, “ I Want to be a doctor and Set up my own clinic in a big town”(JS 62). Mukherjee writes about the cultural hybridization<sup>6</sup> of the new America. Mukherjee shows woman in the motherland that is dependent and submissive as Shah expresses, Mukherjee employs the metaphors of dynamism and journeys to rescue her protagonists from gender and space constrictions (88). The next part exposes Mukherjee's gender oppression within Indian community.

5- This quote refers to Ayus thesis, « Past and Present in Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*(1975) and *Jasmine*(1989)», University of Wollongong, 2011, p. 17).

6- Hybridization: It takes many forms: linguistic; cultural, political, racial, etc (Ashcroft et al. 108). Mukherjee explores some aspects of the collisions between the Indian and American cultures.



### 3. 3. Gender Oppression in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*:

*"Village girls are like cattle"* (46).

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Thus, it is believed that the Israel's displacement<sup>9</sup> is the God's punishment when Israel forces Palestinians to be exiled from their home in 1948. Further, Israel still presents a violent experience toward Palestinian country.

Moreover, the traditional notion of Diaspora indicates a certain dislocation from the normal or 'natural' place of living or a way of life. This dislocating force may be direct or coercive such as lack of opportunities for social or economic advancement. The varied motivations that underpinned movements of individuals and groups in different parts of the world make it hard to define the phenomenon with accuracy and validity across time and space.

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On the other hand, the main protagonist in Mukherjee's novels struggle and adapt to their hard life, as Babu and Kumar elaborat:

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10 -Host land: a new country

male, as a representative of the patriarchal society has at last, being jerked off the center of woman gravitation. The woman is preparing now to be her own gravitational force, beyond the fullness of patriarchy (62-63).

Again, Shah elaborates, "Acknowledging that Mukherjee's sociological messages are molded in fiction, which is metaphorical as she herself has asserted, reveals her keen endeavor to break binaries and erase essentialist boundaries" (87). In addition, Mukherjee's writings pay attention to the problems of women especially as immigrants. She differs from other writers in the way she deals with her heroines because her female characters suffer from double oppression; patriarchy and expatriation. Anitha adds:

So in her writings her women characters make interesting psychological studies... It also exposes the female psyche that is their silence, their resistance and their opposition to patriarchy- the horror of rape, the fear of pregnancy and a craving for male company (34).

Further, Mukherjee's narration exposes gender oppression within Indian community, when she highlights that, "Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go" (JS 46). Mukherjee comments on *Jasmine* that, "I love *Jasmine*, it was a book that came straight from the heart, very intensely done, I was putting in 20 hour days. I was *Jasmine* during that period"<sup>11</sup>. Yet, Mukherjee asserts that *Jasmine* decided to get rid of this patriarchal culture and continue her journey, when she states, "I Want to be a doctor and Set up my own clinic in a big town"(JS 62). Mukherjee writes about the cultural hybridization<sup>12</sup>

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The study of Mukherjee's novels reveal her interest in presenting the journey of women towards identity creation. Datta et al. also illustrate:

In order to survive as a woman in a third world country under the pressure of the male-cantered Western culture, Jasmine sacrifices a lot to prove the power of globalization. Thus, Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* claims the need and the desire to unite, to think transculturally and to build new bridges across the world, to become a global citizen (2-3).

Bhaumik shows Indian traditional rule in *Jasmine* that:

*Jasmine* is a story of the trauma of circumstantial subjugation experienced by a woman in home and expatriation. It too, is a story of a semi-feudal rural India where a mother has to strangle her baby girl just because she will be a dowryless girl in the time of her marriage and also of an astrologer who menacingly sets the destiny of the others (402).

Jasmine is the seventh child of her parents, so she is undesirable and a curse to her family. Nevertheless, Jyoti is a very smart; bold and intelligent girl. Thus, a cousin of Jasmine's father states that big city men prefer village girls because they are brought up to be caring and have no minds of their own. Village girls here are compared to cattle. Jasmine mentions:

My father looked stunned. He cuddled my rough, scratched hands. He turned to Masterji, an ecstatic man. "You have heard it straight from the filly's mouth, as it were, isn't it? The girl

refuses further education. The thing is that bright ladies are bearing bright sons, that is nature's design (JS 51).

This quote reveals the gender oppression in Jasmine's father's attitude who portrays woman's education that "The girl is mad. Her mother is mad. The whole country is mad. Kali Yuga has already come" (JS 52).

According to Jasmine's earlier life, her name is Jyoti and she is from a traditional Punjabi family in Hasnapur. Although, Jasmine's family is not originally from Hasnapur, she was born eighteen years after the Partition Riots<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, Jasmine's village is very poor and there is no water and electricity available for most families who live there. There is also no health facilities; so her family encounters a hard life. They actually lived for centuries in a city called Lahore before Jasmine was born. *Jasmine* states that the political corruption has a strong influence on the lives of the common peopl. After her father died, Jasmine escaped from her first home in Hasnapur, she came in contact with Prakash. Yet, Prakash was killed by a bull after stepping out of a bus. Thus, it is obvious that the mistreatment of political corruption affected Indian common lives. Thus, it was obvious that the mistreatment of political corruption affected Indian common lives. She draws the male as a representative of the patriarchal society and she exposes that woman has been forced to be beyond the fullness of patriarchy. As Hooda illustrates Jasmine's suffering,

Jyoti, which means light, is rechristened by her husband as Jasmine-emblematic of his non feudal, modern perception of Indian women. Meanwhile, Prakash obtains admission to the Florida International Institute of Technology, and the two await visas to the United States (445).

13- Partition Riots : When the country was separated from Pakistan(Queiroz2011).



Valamagham et al. add:

Self-assertion is a power that she believes in, and is beginning to enjoy. Through *Jasmine*, Mukherjee demonstrate how Indian women may possibly change their fate employs magic realism technique to enrich her narrative moving in flashbacks and flash forwards and violating liner time in the process of storytelling (311).

According to Jasmine's mother, she encourages Jasmine to go to the secondary school and continue learning as Jasmine asserts, "My mother loved me so much she tried to kill me, or she would have killed herself, she pulled Duff, their daughter, a little closer to her" (JS 52). she encourages Jasmine. Ayu adds, "It was her mother who struggled to send her to English-medium school in Switzerland although she had to take of flak from the rest of the family, especially her mother"(115). Jasmine remembered her mother who shaved her head afterwards. It was as a sign that her mother had given up her own life.

Therefore, Jasmine is worried of her future life. Jasmine went to superstitions eventhough she knew well that it was a gainst fate. Unfortunately, an astrologer said: "Fate is fate. When Beulah's bridegroom was fated to die of snake bite on their wedding night, did building a still fortress prevent his death?" (JS 2). Although, Prakash is the broadminded man who wants Jasmine to come out of fear and forget her past. She is very happy after marriage with Prakash. As Jasmine explains:

He wanted to break down the Jyoti I'd been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said, "You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume. "Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between

identities (JS 77).

Thus, Mukherjee's narration exposes the gender oppression, she criticizes Indian traditional way that led to woman's oppression. In other word, Jasmine knows the story of woman who burnes herself on her husband's grave after his death, so what her mother has done was not the worst case. So that she has tried to create a new relationship between man and woman based on equality, non oppression, non exploitation. Thus Jasmine remembers an astrologer's speech that she will be a widow at the age of 17. Jasmine tries to run away from her fate. In other word, Jasmine is born a fighter and had a little faith on Oriental Hindu culture. Jasmine believes that the ritual proves to be a quite cruel patriarchy. For example, *Sati*<sup>14</sup> in the traditional Hindu culture. She realizes that to be a widow meant to live a fate worse than death. Jasmine tries not to be a victim of the feudalistic society in Hasnapur after her husband's death. Ponzanesi highlights:

Jasmine's efforts to improve herself open the question of which standard will prevail and for whom must this improvement be performed. Jasmine says 'for herself,' expressing that leading concept of Mukherjee: individualism. Only if you detach yourself from your traditional heritage and fixed familiar bonding can you have a chance at success. Individualism,

14- Sati : Sati meant a good wife, as Arasi and Phil highlighted, a woman who played her gender role in an appropriate way (pp. 68-71). However, Spivak pointed out that "The word sati or suttee, as the British translated the word, however, does not have the meaning of -good wife. Instead, the word sati is understood to mean self-immolation on the husband's pyre. Because of this cultural mistranslation of the word, the British colonizers contend that sati is a barbaric practice and use it to justify their civilizing mission in India. Although the British prohibition of the ritual called sati did save some widows' lives, it was also used symbolically as a means of showing British superiority over Indian barbarism, being seen as a case of white men saving brown women from brown men (Queiroz48).



hence, is an illusion that is upheld by projecting cultural specificity exclusively on others (47) .

His death is similar to Jasmine's father death. According to the period of the British Raj, the attempts are made to restore woman's status and some interpretations assert the gender oppression. Rather, feudalism has a major role in British expansion within India society. Therefore, Indian women novelists continue to change the perception of women during the last four decades. They have moved away from traditional patriarchy and are ready to eliminate the barriers of tradition. This is clear in *Jasmine* that exposes the gender oppression and represents a quest for freedom.

Thus, immigration is the outcome of Britain's colonial rise; the regime of the colonizer aims to force the native population in to exile and replaces Europeans in different parts of the world. When Jasmine feels alienated in her own country. So, Indian nations don't know the background of their history; and why they live in a new country. In addition, Mukherjee narrates immigrants' texts and depicts her identity fragmentation. Thus, diaspora writers become divorced from the homeland as they spread to new lands.

In "An Invisible Woman", an early essay on the workings of Canadian racism and multiculturalism, as Chaudhari mentions:

Mukherjee highlights the paradoxes involved in her everyday experience of living in Canada as a woman rendered 'invisible', on a national and cultural level, by the color of her skin, a key marker of her visibility as a non-European immigrant... In particular, Mukherjee identifies what she calls the virulent and unabashed racism inherent in the Canadian discourse of multiculturalism as having obstructed the attempts of ethnic citizens like her and her characters from staking a claim to a home in the mainstream spaces of the Canadian nation (20-

21).

Thus, she converted herself into a celebrity immigrant and moved to the United States. The blending of these various lives and experiences are clear in her works, which constitutes an important part of contemporary immigrant literature. Again, immigrants face various diasporic experiences; such as exile, dislocation and alienation in the new country. As Bhaumik shows Mukherjee's experience:

It was the ability of Mukherjee's characters to endure their exilic anguish, to work through their anxieties, alienations and dislocations towards a life that may be radically incomplete but continues to be intricately steam-rolled by aspirations and fantasies (156).

Later, Jasmine decides to go to America. She tries to enter the United States illegally<sup>15</sup>. During her adventurous journey, she met the captain of the trawler in which she crosses over to Florida. He is called Half-Face because he lost an eye; ear and most of his cheek in a paddy field in Vietnam. Moreover, Mukherjee reveals another oppression towards the female immigrants. When Jasmine arrives in America, she is raped by the captain who is in a room at the Flamingo Court hotel, as Jasmine states:

The bathroom steamed like a smokehouse. I reached into the pocket of my salwar for Kingslands knife. Until the moment that I held its short, sharp blade to my throat I had not thought of any conclusion but the obvious one: to balance my defilement with my death ...It was the murkiness of the mirror and a sudden sense of mission that stopped me...I could not let my personal dishonor disrupt my mission. There would be plenty of time to die; I had not yet burned my husbands suit. I had not

15- Illegally : to enter the country without a visa.



stood under the palm trees of the college campus. I extended my tongue, and sliced it. Hot blood dripped immediately in the sink. I had planned it all so perfectly. To lay out the suit, to fill it with twigs and papers. To light it, then to lie upon it in the white cotton sari I had brought from home (JS 118-119).

Thus, she killed the monstrous captin, instead of committing suicide. She resisted the situation, which brought transformation in her life. Also, Jasmine burnt her wedding clothes, it was as a symbol to separate her life from the Indian patriarchal system. Rather, Mukherjee presents one of the main themes in diasporic female, when Mukherjee shows a Hindu widow's resistance in a new land, i.e. Jasmine's resistance. Again, Jasmine proves her attitudes against American woman's attitude towards sexuality, even though she prepares herself to live in America. Thus, Jasmine is a clear instance of a fighter and survivor in her battles against the odds and overcome the obstacles in her path. She shows the courage, even while in Hasnapur by killing a rabid dog.

Later, Gordon takes Jasmine to her house because she is an illegal immigrant. Gordon takes care of her in many different ways, as Jasmine mentions:

Another daughter was in Guatemala working with Kanjobal Indians. Three Kanjobal women slept in bunk beds in that daughter's room. I didn't tell Mrs. Gordon what she'd rescued me from. In some fundamental way, she didn't care. I was no threat, and I was in need. The world's misery was a challenge to her ingenuity. She brought a doctor in to sew my tongue. The Kanjobal women in her house had all lost their husbands and children to an army massacre. She forbade all discussion of it (JS 131).

Meanwhile, Gordon warned Jasmine, "Let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you" (JS 131).

On the other hand, Mukherjee's text illustrates immigrants' suffering, when *Jasmine* portrays a racial discrimination in America. Jasmine feels alienated in a host society<sup>16</sup>. She lived in the company of other three immigrants women from Guatemala. Even though, Gordon helped her in the first days in the USA.

Meanwhile, Mukherjee presents another main theme of diaspora literature, i.e. nostalgia. When Jasmine saw the picture, she states: "Lillian showed me the book. The pictures brought back such memories of Hasnapur, I wept. That daughter now lived in New York and was a professional photographer...She had a low tolerance for reminiscence, bitterness or nostalgia" (JS 131). Jasmine still misses her past in Hasnapur.

Later, Jasmine met professor Vadhera who was Prakash's mentor in New York. Then, Jasmine left Gordon's home and lived with Mr. Vadhera's family. Mukherjee states that Vadhera family maintained their Indian identity. Nevertheless, they lived in America for a long period. Jasmine cannot understand why they were trying to maintain their Indianness in a Western country. When Jasmine was forced to wear sari that expressed her status as a widow. She was angry to live as a widow. As Jasmine mentions, "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" (JS 145).

Jasmine feels that it is very difficult to adjust with Vadheras's values so she takes decision to run away from America to Manhattan. Thus, she escaped to Iowa where she met American banker called Bud Wipplemeyer. He was a tall and handsome person whose age was fifty years old, he fell in love with her. Later, she got a job in Bud's bank, and she lived in companion to Bud and stepmother to Bud's adopted son Du. As Jasmine explains:

16- A host society : a new country in America.



That first fall I was so busy loving Bud and settling Du in school and fighting off Karin that I missed what was happening between Bud and Harlan. I thought of Bud as a secular god of Baden, and everyone in town as his devotee (JS 169).

Thus, Jasmine is happy when she becomes a wife and caregiver in a Western country. Yet, Jasmine misunderstands that the imagery of Hindu religion prefers the woman to be wife and caregiver. Unfortunately, the violence again occurs in her life, as Jasmine adds, "Shooting Bud was unthinkable, a decide, worse than assassinating the Mahatma" (JS 169). Because Bud denies a bank loan to him, Jasmine notices that Kroener attends to harm Bud. After sometime, Bud is confined to wheelchair. Eventhough, the Baden country<sup>17</sup> gives her life a new beginning, she still has a sense of conflicting identities and loses even her sense of self expression. Her conflict expresses the diasporic experience in a new country. She becomes aware that her difference is recognized but not comprehended or openly acknowledged, as Jasmine argues:

Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him simply by being who I am. Bud would have left Karin, or twisted in mid-life until he dropped. I was a catalyst, not a cause. I make him feel what he's never felt, do what he's never done. There's a shape-changing, risk-taking pirate rattling the cage of his heavy flesh (JS 200).

Meanwhile, Jasmine struggles in an alien land, and she perceives as both familial and professional that emphasizes the connection between worker and wife. In addition, Jasmine is trapped within the darkness of her skin. She depicts the farmers of Baden as, "They want to make me familiar. In a pinch, they'll admit that I might look a little different, that I'm

17- Baden County : Iowa

a “dark-haired girl” in a naturally blond county” (JS 33). Thus, Jasmine shows her ethnic identity in an alien land, as Jasmine mentions, “I’m less than half his age, and very foreign” (JS 7). As Emanuela highlights:

In *Jasmine*, for instance, this ambivalence is seen as a cause of personal disintegration and existential difficulty. Only through the extremely personal facets of her life is the narrator of Jasmine able to make some form of resistance and some subversion of the discourse that surrounds her (260).

Moreover, Jasmine is shocked when Du’s teacher, Mr. Skola, tries to use Vietnamese to communicate with him. The teacher presents a complete lack of respect for the boy since he ignores the fact that his attitude of speaking in Vietnamese might bring back undesirable memories for Du. Jasmine expresses her anger, as she expresses:

I suppressed my shock, my disgust. This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing. How dare you? What must he have thought? His history teacher in Baden, Iowa, just happens to know a little street Vietnamese? Now where would he have picked it up? There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. (JS 29).

The reader comes to share her impatience towards Western culture, when the teacher throws up his hands in amazement. Jasmine admits that American country has many ways of humiliating and disappointing. She illustrates that American home is complicated and is not opened to newcomers. So she becomes conflicting and hesitating.

Therefore, Jasmine decides to leave Bud and moves to California with Taylor. She does not accept her fate. She learns by now that nothing lasts forever and so she does not need to force herself to live in a life that she does not want. Again, Jasmine demonstrates how Indian women may change their fate, she believes that she will enjoy and feel happiness of her life if she has a sense of self assertion.



Jasmine plans for a new home and a new identity that comfort her life. Yet the reader does not know what will become of her or how many more subjectivities she may create since the novel has an open ending. Further, Jasmine represents her mysterious foreignness as a dark fantasy. She prefers to go with Taylor's country where it is far away of patriarchal culture. As Jasmine highlights:

I cry into Taylors shoulder, cry through all the lives I've given birth to, cry for all my dead. Then there is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor (JS 241).

Mukherjee expresses that Jasmine is as a victim in a Western environment, there is no liberality in Baden country. Puri explains that "Jasmine's first encounter with America is a kind of regeneration through violence" (1).

Unfortunately, the last paragraph explores that Jasmine still looks for freedom and comfort life, when she says, "There is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud" (JS 241). Jasmine reveals one of the diasporic bitter experience, i.e. exile. Jasmine feels exiled and restless. Eventhough, she becomes a liberated woman, she demonstrates such power of transformation, so that she accepts that when Karin calls her a tornado. Rather, Mukherjee reveals Jasmine's resistant discourse, Jasmine's dream is a will to power because the dream and the program which followed it were acts of agency. It is obvious that Jasmine's subjectivity is not erased. In this way, Jasmine and others affords agency, she fights against the male dominance both in India and in the United States. she hopes the total freedom and comfortable life. In fact, she attempts to have full control over her life. She is too much far away from where she starts and

what she desires, as she mentions:

I still think of myself as caregiver, recipe giver, preserver. I can honestly say all I wanted was to serve, be allowed to join, but I have created confusion and destruction wherever I go. As Karin says, I am a tornado. I hit the trailer parks first, the prefabs, the weakest links. How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husbands? (JS 215).

On the other hand, Mukherjee presents the heterogeneity<sup>18</sup> which has a major role in diaspora literature. It can be seen through the character of Jasmine who encounters different locations. Jasmine's Indian village was very different from Jullundhar; and Professorji's America was not the same as Bud Ripplemeyer's. Thus, Mukherjee becomes aware of the complications and contradictions that show in Jasmine's life.

Nevertheless, Jasmine's different roles as daughter, wife and caretaker represent her own identity of being an Indian woman. However, she remains an Indian wife when she killed her rapist in what a Western feminist might see as an empowerment scene. Thus, Jasmine changes in America, but she still has an Indian ethos. This might be the reason why the novel is called *Jasmine* after her Indian husband, even though Taylor called her Jase. At the end, Jasmine maintains Indian and Hindu values. In other words, Jasmine knows very well that she is an Indian woman who tries to protect her womanhood. As Urmila illustrates that "Different locations assign her different roles – daughter, wife, and caretaker, beloved and competent professional but at every stage she is of achieving an identity of her own, along with her consciousness of her being an Indian woman" (62).

In other words, Jasmine struggles to search for her own identity. Jasmine's identity is fragmented into two worlds, as Puri elaborates that

18- Heterogeneity: it means the cultural differences between the motherland country and a new country.



“One of “nativity” and the other as an ‘immigrant’...caught between the two cultures of the east and the west, the past and the present, Jasmine constantly shuffles in search of a concrete identity” (3).

In fact, Jasmine's life explores a multicultural conflict in America. Multiculturalism expose the hard life of diasporic immigrants' experiences. Sangita illustrates:

Hence America is emerging as a multicultural and multiracial country. Mukherjee's *Jasmine* centers on the life of immigrant Jasmine, Jasmine in love, in difficulty, in relationship. Her interest lies in showing Jasmine's paradoxical existence which began soon after she left Indian shores(6).

Moreover, she still struggles and suffers in her lives, as Sukumary indicates that “Jasmine floats through the ups and downs and an array of identity transformations. It is undeniable that her ‘mindscape has a plethora of denials, pains, pathos and an array of sufferings.’ Jasmine, however, emerges as a survivor and her life as an immigrant eventually is a success” (72). Meanwhile, Mythili and Phil interpret Jasmine's journey that “In her ‘Land of Opportunity’, Jasmine is thrown from one state of insecurity to another and she lets go all her hold on things which she would have held dear in India” (537).

Above all , She is as victim in both First World and Third World, Emanuela asserts: Each ‘India’ and each ‘America’ has its own unique symbolic Order, and each lays its traces within the imaginary unity that the narrator seeks..., but rather that it is aware of the complications and contradictions that remain within that dichotomy (216). Mukherjee illustrates that immigrant is fighter. Jasmine struggles for her own survival. She is a fighter in both countries. Her transformation is full of risk; violence, fear and terror. Each stage of her life ends in fear and terror. Further, Jasmine learns to handle the difficulties of her life....Yet, the result is a series of ambivalence.

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