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THE OPTIMISTIC WOMEN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S NOVEL JASMINE

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Abstract

Bharathi Mukherjee is well- acclaimed Indian Diaspora writer in English, has eight novels and two collections of short stories to her credit. In the field of contemporary literature, the Asian and particularly Indian Diaspora comes into being with compelling force as a cultural phenomenon in the writing of Bharati Mukherjee. Her stories revolve round the clash of culture experienced by Indians who have immigrated to North America but still have difficulty in acculturating. The protagonists of most of her stories go to America with an ambition of either for higher studies or to settle in. They finally realize their identity after losing their invaluable things. This paper deals with the character Jasmine the protagonist of the novel *Jasmine* who is portrayed optimistically in her immigrant life.

Keywords: *Optimism, Diaspora, Culture, Acculturating.*

1. Introduction

Bharathi Mukherjee, the well- acclaimed Indian Diaspora writer in English, has eight novels and two collections of short stories to her credit. In the field of contemporary literature, the Asian and particularly Indian Diaspora comes into being with compelling force as a cultural phenomenon in the writing of Bharati Mukherjee. Her stories seek to dramatize the immigrant experience in America. Her stories revolve round the clash of culture experienced by Indians who have immigrated to North America but still have difficulty in acculturating. The protagonists of most of her stories go to America with an ambition of either for higher studies or to settle in. They finally realize their identity after losing their invaluable things. As well this paper deals the character Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel *Jasmine*, who is the optimist in immigrant life.

In 1989, Bharati Mukherjee produced the novel *Jasmine*, the story of a young woman from Punjab, India who experiences identity crisis and cultural conflict. The story narrates Jasmine's search for her true and unfragmented identity and the transformations she experiences in a positive and optimistic way. Thus, it becomes a tale of moral courage seeking for self-awareness. The novel is a classical bildungsroman since it only focuses on a short but very intense life span of the protagonist Jasmine; and it involves her struggle against not only the ordinary difficulties which is experienced by every young person but also challenges related with her sexual, racial, national and cultural identity. The story of Jasmine's life in India, her migration to United States and her struggle to define herself depicts the

similar stories of many Eastern women. It shows the pave to discuss cultural conflict and identity crisis by focusing on the Eastern women in opposition to the dominant power of the Western.

In the story 'Jasmine', the protagonist Jasmine, the student, is daughter of Dr. Vassanji illegally to Detroit from Port-of-Spain, Trinidad via Canada with the help of the van driver who has helped her by giving money and directing her to the Daboos with some suggestions. The journey shows, Jasmine's determination to reach the place. The Daboos were people from Trinidad; Indian who runs 'The Plantations Motel' Jasmine doesn't like Trinidad. She feels that it is not the place for a girl with ambition'. She considers Trinidad as the place of nowhere and the people as nobodies.

Jasmine feels very superior when she sees Mr. Daboo at the reception area. The daboos show her a room and receive her warmly. Mr. Daboo has found her a job. Her job is checking and confirming the social security cards. Jasmine has learnt the art of cooking and serving Americans from Mrs. Daboo.

She uses to work even on Sunday for an African Mr. Anthony. She has worked for a black man for the first time. She feels it as a new life and shows interest to learn everything. She decides to use her wits to do something with her life to assimilate into the AMERICAN SOCIETY. The immigrants of Bharati Mukherjee are born with the qualities of a true American which reflect her feelings as she says "I feel there are people born to be Americans".

Viola and Loretta are the daughters of Daboos. Loretta rouses Jasmine to leave her work and come to Ann Arbor to have fun then she accompanied these Daboos daughters along with their boyfriends and has felt overjoyed with the dance and music for the first time after coming to Detroit. The efforts of her assimilation is understood when she whole heartedly dances. After enjoying at Ann Arbor her urged to pursue higher studies made her stay away from Daboos but she finds a new job of looking after the little girl, Muffin, the daughter of Bill Moffitt and Lora Hatch Moffitt, along with the "housework" and "cooking" Bill Moffitt is a teacher of molecular biology and Lara is a performance artist.

Being with Moffitt for a couple of months, Jasmine feels lucky to have such a small, clean and friendly family. She recollects her father's saying "You is a helluva girl, Jasmine. She feels happy and questions herself, if she is not fortunate enough, how her condition would have been. Moffitts have treated Jasmine as one their family members. As Lara used to be busy with her rehearsal moving to different places, jasmine's attention is towards Bill in absence of Lara. When Bill drops her off at "the plantations Mote" at the weekend, he encourages Jasmine to fell free "you work too hard.... Learn to be more selfish. Come on, through your weight around". She doesn't even think of her parents as she feels independent.

On the day of Christmas when Mr. Daboo has pinned a brooch on Jasmine's red sweater, She outbursts emotionally by seeing tears in Mr. Daboos eyes and realizes that she has fulfilled her dream overcoming all the "damned uncomfortable time" she has experienced. Then, her desire to settle in America is understood in two ways. She likes the Americans and praises them; and is reluctant towards her home town. The Daboos sisters were very friendly but Jasmine used to consider them as too wild as they are from her home town. She also says "there was nothing to tell about her hometown that wouldn't shame her in front of white American folk like the Motifs".

When Bill encourages her to dance with him in absence of Lara, she dances and feel s very mush comfortable with him. Bill motivates her for self-decision saying "you are your own person now". When she physically unites with Bill, she forgets "all the dreariness of her new life and gave herself up to it." Jasmine who used to fell home sick at the beginning has transformed into a self-decisive person". As Muriel Wasi remarks, "The success of this story, lies in the fact that Bharati Mukherjee has forgotten to be violent and remembers that there are emotions, more fundamental and universal than killing".

2. Conclusion

Jasmine starts her journey as a traditional Indian girl. Both happiness and grief in every step she experiences towards her final situation. She fights against not only the male dominance both in India

and in the States but also the hostility between her Eastern and Western characteristics with the hope of total freedom and unity in herself. Eventually, the dominant values of the global world force Jasmine to conciliate all the elements of her multicultural identity.

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