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The idea of modern woman in Bharati Mukherjee's 'Jasmine'

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Abstract

This study examines an assortment of problems that happen in ordinary woman's life, the dilemma of bodily and psychologically harassed women and ultimately endeavour to indicate the significance of being a 'Modern Woman' in order to conquer the hindrance in her life. Bharati Mukherjee illustrates a modern woman as a girl who insurgent, insurgency next to all probability in her life courageously, adapts herself to all traditions and atmospheres thereby existing and livelihood her life audaciously. Bharati Mukherjee imbibes the best of Indian and Western culture, finds 'Modern Women' to be an obligatory solution to face life with elegance.

Keywords: insurgent, insurgency, audaciously, obligatory

1. Introduction

Jasmine (1989) is novel by Bharati Mukherjee set in the present about a young Indian woman in the United States who, trying to adapt to the American way of life in order to be able to survive, changes identities several times.

The main backdrop of Jasmine, which was based on an earlier short story in *The Middleman and Other Stories*, is the mixing of the East and West through the story telling of a seventeen-year-old Hindu woman who leaves India for the U.S. after her husband's murder in a religious attack in India. In her path she faces many problems, including rape, eventually returning to the position of health professional through a series of jobs. Here in this context the unity between the First and Third World is shown in the treatment of women as subordinate to men in both countries. The story expanded as a story of a young girl suddenly widowed at seventeen. She uproots herself from her life in India and re-roots herself in search of a new life and the image of America as well. It is a story of dislocation and relocation as the protagonist continually sheds lives to move into other roles, moving further westward. The author in parts of the novel shows some agony to the third world as she shows that Jasmine needs to travel to America to make something significant in her life. And in the third world she faced only despair and loss.

The complex journey of immigration and the hardships immigrants undergo are common themes in Bharati Mukherjee's writings. The author, an immigrant herself, tries to show the darker side of immigration, especially for Hindu women, that is not often portrayed in other immigrant narratives. In the novel, Jasmine Mukherjee uses three types of immigrants to show how different the hardships of adhering to life in an adopted country can be. Her main immigrant characters fall mainly into three categories: the refugee, the hyphenated immigrant, and the chameleon.

In response to her insecurities, Prakash says, "You're Jasmine now. You cannot jump into wells". Prakash believes that the new Jasmine he has helped emerge is capable of living on her own and being independent. Even though many of Prakash's actions are controlling, Jasmine realizes that she has changed in many ways due to Prakash. She narrates, "My life before Prakash, the girl I had been, the village, were like a dream from another life". After Prakash dies by a radio bomb meant for Jyoti, she emerges as Jasmine.

Jasmine Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 in Calcutta, India. (Pradhan) She was born into a wealthy family, which assisted her in her dream of becoming a writer. She lived in India, Europe, the United States, and Canada. Migrating to these countries that are so different from her place of birth enabled her to write very powerful novels on immigrant experiences. Mukherjee's novels focus on exploring the migration and the feeling of alienation that is experienced by these immigrants.

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The prominent characteristic of postcolonial writing is the incorporation of writing back or rewriting history into the narrative from the point of view of the colonized. Postcolonial narratives speak out and attempt to expose the injustices of dominant culture often within their own cultural system. Within this framework, many female authors give agency to the once silenced female voice of the colonized. By employing their own narratives, many postcolonial female authors demystify the prescribed ideologies thrust upon them by a patriarchal culture while at the same time expressing their own sense of loss of cultural identity.

An astrologer predicts that the young Jyoti (Jasmine's given

Indian name) will be widowed and will live among foreigners. Horrified and unbelieving, the seven-year-old girl rejects her foretold future and then falls, injuring her forehead with a bundle of firewood she is carrying. The injury leaves a portentous star-shaped scar on her forehead.

Jyoti spends her youth in the village of Hasnapur, Punjab, India. When she is fifteen years old, she marries Prakash Vihh, and they form a partnership of love and mutual goals that focuses on a move to the United States. In America, they can expand and even supersede the limits of their traditional background—all in hope of beginning a repair business for computers, televisions, and other technological icons of the modern age.

Jyoti (which means "light") is rechristened by her husband as Jasmine—emblematic of his nonfeudal, 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. As they wait, against the backdrop of escalating religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus decades after the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, Jasmine and Prakash find themselves the victims of a bombing. Prakash is killed sacrificing himself by shielding his wife and saving her life.

Jasmine, combining a determination to honor her husband in a traditional way (burn his clothes and create a funeral pyre) and in a progressive way (continue his journey), sets off to the United States and tries to enter the country illegally (she is both underage and without a visa).

Jasmine, a vivacious, starry-eyed, young Indian woman from Trinidad who believes that Trinidad is too small for a girl with ambition, has herself smuggled into the United States to find a well-employed husband and forge a new life. She enters Detroit from the Canadian border while hidden in the back of a mattress truck. With her daddy's admonition that opportunity comes only once resounding in her ears, she challenges herself to use her wits and to refashion her destiny.

Being an illegal alien, Jasmine spends her first few months working as a chambermaid and bookkeeper, in exchange for meager board and lodging, at the Plantation Motel in Southfield, run by the Daboos, a family of Trinidadian Indians who helped her get there. Conscious of her social status as a physician's daughter in Port-of-Spain, she feels superior to the Daboos, thinking of them as country bumpkins who were nobodies back home. She decides to leave them soon.

The central action of the story begins when Loretta and Viola, the Daboo girls, prevail on Jasmine to go with them to Ann Arbor to the big bash of the West Indian Students' Association. The music, the dance, and the company of boys who talked with confidence about their futures in the United States stir her desires and ambition, and she decides not to return to the life of drudgery at the Plantation Motel.

All through the novel, Jasmine encounters giant circumstances which fetch out the brutality and intellectual disturbance in her. She is not only faces physical brutality, but also faces mental brutality that forces her to be instinctive as a dissimilar human being in different stage of her life. The development of Jasmine from one phase of advancement to the other phase of life is described as a audacious personality.

Women's life and the preference they make are eventually produced by their altering situations. Jasmine experiences a diversity of passage from the world of Rural Indian Punjabi

woman to that of America's Mid-West.

In other words, she is an accurate feminist-Modern Woman who struggles every day in life to ascertain herself in the civilization. Jasmine comprehends that the true individuality of a person does not lie in being an Indian or an American but it lies in the inner strength of the person to be at concord with her.

Jasmine's commencement from her birth till the evacuation to the USA passes through numerous circumstances and crosses from one country to another which exposes that her inner self is reborn numerous times till she attains a higher level.

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