

# A Critical Analysis of Multiculturalism In Bharathi Mukherjee's Jasmine

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**Abstract-** This article analyses the "Multiculturalism" in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, told in the first person and in a semi style, which is about the journey and personal growth of a young Indian lady as she attempts to assimilate into an American culture. Jasmine, the protagonist, performs a wide range of roles during her young life, influenced by Mukherjee's experiences. The novel's central theme is the battle to discover one's identity while being adaptable and strong enough to alter oneself for each new life event. Assimilation and identity are important elements in *Jasmine's* development since she is given new names at each point along her trip; some of these names are liberating, while others are oppressive. Jasmine's varied sorts of love for two different men, as well as the choice she must make between that sense of loyalty and the desire to freely follow her heart, also touch the issues of duty and love.

**Keywords-** Alienation, Multiculturalism, Identity Crisis, Cross-Culture.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Colonialism was primarily a meeting between two diverse civilizations. 'Diaspora' is a key concept in postcolonial discourse, and it means dispersion.' Diaspora is a group of individuals who have been uprooted from their homeland and rooted to another cultural region for a variety of causes. They are technically caught between two cultures: their own and the new one. In general, diasporic literature explores themes such as rootlessness, racial discrimination, identity crisis, displacement, cross-cultural encounters, nostalgia, and isolation. Many outstanding authors from India have travelled to the United States, Canada, and other European countries, where they've faced a wide range of cultural conflicts. We can observe the fusion of cultures and their longing for home in their works.

Multiculturalism, often known as diversity, is a feature of today's globalized society. Because multiple cultures merge and blend to produce a unified whole, multicultural society has been described as a "salad bowl model." For example, America is a 'salad bowl.' Without a

dominant culture, multiculturalism emerges. India is a diverse society since its diversity is defined by multilingualism. Language has always played a crucial role in building a country's political character. Each state is free to use its own traditions and language inside its borders. India, being a diverse country, has many cultures, including religions and caste systems intertwined. India shows a positive attitude toward cultural diversity since it enables all citizens to freely express their cultures and present their concept of India without forcing one dominating view on the others.

Bharathi Mukherjee, an award-winning Indian-born American writer, is recognized as a chronicler of immigrant life. Her works include novels such as "*The Tiger's Daughter*," "*Wife*," "*Jasmine*," "*The Holder of the World*," and "*Leave it to Me*," as well as short tales such as "*Darkness*" and "*The Middleman and Other Stories*." She addresses the internal cultural struggles of her immigrant characters in her award-winning collection *The Middleman and Other Stories* and novels such as *Jasmine*. Mukherjee's debut work, *The Tiger's Daughter*, deals with concerns of the isolation of the Indian expatriate. Her life is one of the finest examples of two cultures merging because she was born in India and then immigrated to America. As an immigrant, she faces cross-cultural challenges and identity conflicts, and we can see the merging of two cultures in her writings. Writing, she claims, is constantly at odds with conventional preconceptions or complacency. Mukherjee stated in an interview that she considers herself an American writer rather than an Indian Diasporic one.

One of Mukherjee's most renowned books, *Jasmine*, portrays the protagonist's cultural change. To survive, the heroine, Jasmine, a young Indian lady, attempts to adapt to the American way of life. She begins her existence as Jyoti in India, where she rebels against the traditional society that has been assigned to her. Jyoti is an outspoken individual. She changes her name to Jasmine after her marriage, her first step toward becoming a city girl. Jyoti seeks a modern and educated spouse who rejects dowries and conventions, and therefore meets Prakash, a modern-thinking guy from the

United States. Prakash encourages Jyoti to study English by giving her a new name, Jasmine, and a new life.

“He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I’d been I 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”. (77)

The second part of the novel is about Jasmine's life in America, where she encounters challenges. After her spouse died, she immigrated to the United States to continue out her husband's purpose. Jasmine's continual transition from one persona to another is visible. She arrived in America illegally and knows nothing about the American way of life. Jasmine begins to feel loneliness and disappointment as a result of the challenges that the expatriate society faces. She is not a native English speaker.

Jasmine meets a sweet white old lady who teaches her English and provides her with shelter for a few days. Then she decides to go to New York to pursue her desires. In the novel's end, Jasmine moves to Canada, where she married another man named Bud Ripple Meyer and settles in Iowa, switching her name to Jane Ripple Meyer. During her journey from New York to Canada, the novel's protagonist, Jyoti, goes through several transformations, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane. Mukherjee explores the multicultural challenges encountered by an Indian immigrant woman in this novel. In America, she tries to follow the American way of life while renouncing her Indian culture. Some characteristics, such as language, clothes, and socio-cultural environment, exacerbate the problem of nation and identity following migration. She is dealing with the issue of cultural assimilation.

“I could not admit that I had accustomed myself to American clothes. American clothes disguised me widowhood. In a T-shirt and cords, I was taken for a student. In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian”. (128)

## II. CONCLUSION

Mukherjee, via her character Jasmine, demonstrates a woman's ability to reinvent herself in a New World. Uprooted from her native India, Jasmine works hard to construct a new universe filled with new ideas and ideals, while continually unmasking her past in order to develop a new cultural identity in the new and foreign culture. This demonstrates Mukherjee's integration into the American way of life. Jasmine dislikes living a consistent life; she prefers to adapt to her

circumstances. We see her as a survivor, a warrior, and an adaptable in this tale. Jasmine's transformation is the complete change of an Indian body into an American soul.

To conclude Mukherjee has explored into her subject's various complexities. Jasmine's journey from a semi-educated Punjabi rustic to an American is impressive. Perhaps Mukherjee's goal of presenting the multiculturalism in the experiences of the floating components in American society, the immigrant striving to establish themselves, has been accomplished. It is not simple to overcome the "remoteness of transportation" or to separate oneself from one's cultural backgrounds and traditions. Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane, who construct a life for every name, appear to be a possibility for each eager immigrant. As a result of being caught between two cultures, east and west, past and present, old and new, Jasmine is continuously "diverted" in seeking of a clear identity.

## REFERENCES

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