

Cultural Perplexity of Immigrants in Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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Abstract-This research paper analyzes the cultural perplexity of the immigrants in Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Jasmine* from the postcolonial and feminist perspectives. It records the traumatic experiences of the immigrants, the women's consciousness, and self-discovery in the new society in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* by using the postcolonial ideology of Homi K. Bhabha, and other postcolonial theorists, and Beauvoir's attitude to the second sex as theoretical tools. The protagonist, who is a young Indian woman, Jasmine living in the United States, is trying to adapt to the American ways of life in order to be able to survive, and changes identities

Keywords: Diaspora; dislocation; disorientation; homelessness; hybridity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present study attempts to apply the postcolonial approach in Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Jasmine* (1989) to mark cultural perplexity of the immigrants. The chief focus of the paper is to observe such postcolonial aspects as mimicry, homelessness, diaspora leading to the cultural perplexity in *Jasmine*. The Postcolonial Indian English Literature began with the independence of India from the British colony (Avirami, 2018). The postcolonial era gave enormous scope for the women writers in India. The Indian women writers who have received universal recognition are Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee and so on. Bharati Mukherjee has made a deep impression on the literary canvas. Bharati Mukherjee is "a familiar voice in the India Diaspora" (Selvadurai, 2005, p. 6). Mukherjee is credited for depicting the contemporary non-European immigrant experience in the United States and for "subverting the very notion of what the American novel is and of what American culture is" (Mambrol, 2020, para. 1). New (2002) scrutinizes Mukherjee's novels marks the immigrants, her leading characters, wandering and searching for self-identity. Her fictions truly reflect the temperament and mood of the present American society as experienced by immigrants in America (Mambrol, 2020). Her characters are mostly depicted as displaced and alienated from their land of origin and moving to the USA. Therefore, the researchers can mark the autobiographical note in her remarkable fictions like *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1975), and *Jasmine* (1989). Mukherjee's sketches the female characters from the periphery of society; and they are fated to spend their lives in an alien country (Selvadurai, 2005). Mukherjee's *Jasmine* explores the socio-political issues that determine the position on American identity through the migration narrative of its title character.

several times. Moreover, this research is to survey how Jasmine is trying to assimilate two world's experiences as the attempts to find her place, her role, in the new society she encounters. The disorientation, state of exile and alienation, and feeling of loss transform Jasmine into a troubled immigrant person who is madly in search of her identity in a strange land. The chief finding of the paper is that Jasmine experiences cultural perplexity during her journey. It is expected that researchers intending to explore Mukherjee from the postcolonial dimension can take the paper as a reference.

Jasmine is based on Mukherjee's short story by the same name. The story of *Jasmine* shows "the stark realities about life in the rural areas as well as the struggle and the hushed up work related to migration and adaptation to survive in a foreign land" (Timishley, 2021). The story begins with the adventure of a Punjabi village girl, Jyothi. Jyoti was born approximately 1965 in a rural Indian village called Hasnpur. Prakash, an energetic and enthusiastic young man enters into Jyothi's life as her husband. When Prakash prepares to go to America, she says, "I'll go with you and if you leave me, I will jump into a well" (p. 3). She makes a decision to go America. Having learned to walk and talk like an American, she grabs every opportunity to become American. Jasmine becomes Jase. Finally, Jyoti kills the Khalsa lion, Sukhawinder who had killed Prakash. After that she goes to Iowa assuming a new name Jase. Jasmine plays manifold roles from Jase to Jane to assault masculine society. This power can be equal to Sakthi which is command over quality that destroys and fights against all evils (Sharma, 2016). Breaking away from the bondages of gender, ethnicity and family, Jasmine proves to be a winner and sets a new life in a foreign country.

Throughout the course of the novel, Jasmine's identity, along with her name, changes and changes again from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jassy to Jase to Jane (Tai, 2016). In chronological order, Jasmine moves from Hasnpur, Punjab, to Fowlers Key, Florida, to Flushing, New York, to Manhattan, to Baden, Iowa, and finally is off to California as the novel ends. Oonk (2007) observes that the author depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey (p. 63). The research seeks to answer these questions: What leads Jasmine to undergo through many traumatic experiences resulting from her confrontation with the alien lands and culture, which is different from the one she has left behind in the country of her origin? Why does Jasmine face

loneliness, confusion, and anger in the effort to reshape her life in America? The researcher aims at surveying how Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmasking her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is textual as constructed and guarded by circumference of postcolonial and feminist approach. It is based on the qualitative research carried on with the purposive sampling. Apart from the intensive study of the text, *Jasmine* by Mukherjee, as the primary data, the methodological tools are also drawn from post-colonialism and feminist theories to analyze the cultural perplexity of the immigrants. For the collection of the related materials, articles the library, websites, and magazines will be taken as secondary sources to discuss on the concept of identity and place.

Conceptual Framework

Postcolonial Literature refers to “the literature produced by the people, who were formerly colonized and subjugated” (Avirami, 2018). Bhabha (1994), the chief advocate of postcolonial theory, highlights Mimicry, Ambivalence, Hybridity, and Identity as the chief concepts of Postcolonial Literature. Postcolonial literature often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially questions relating to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people, and themes such as racism and colonialism (Gaandhi, 1998). Feminism is a specific kind of political discourse, a theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism (Susan, 1995). Feminist critics speak against patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Patriarchy is probably the oldest form of exploitation of one part of the population by another (Ruth, 1990). The biological, economic, or psychological factors can't determine the destiny of women in the present society (Beauvoir, 1974).

The postcolonial and feminist discourses have provided the researcher with a chance to understand the text better, and to know the female problems, identity and existence and their struggle for their self-identity, and autonomy.

Review of Related Literature

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* has been analyzed from diverse critical perspectives since its publication. There are a group of critics who has analyzed its subject-matter, theme, and narrative techniques. Erton (2013) regards that Mukherjee describes the struggle of diaspora for reconciliation between exile and home. Another critic, Garrison (2008) analyzed Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and marked it as “a product of diasporic and identity crisis” (p. 4). The concept of home is deeply attached with our existence in this world. Dhawan (1998) observes that Bharati Mukherjee is at her best in the depiction of cultural clash between the east and the west in *Jasmine*. Rogue (2001) judges that the tremendous difference between two ways of life leads Mukherjee to feeling of depression and frustration.

Judging on the character of Jasmine, Tai (2016) argues, “Jasmine exemplifies all immigrant women who have taken their

destiny at home” (p. 66). Jasmine's character keeps on getting transformed from a sincere traditional Indian wife, Jasmine to Jase and then to Bud's Jane after she meets Taylor (Agrawal, 2011). Jasmine's life in India, her migration to United States and her struggle to define herself portray the similar stories of many others both as easterners and women (Erten, 2013). Mythili (2013) observes, “Jasmine metamorphoses herself constantly during this journey, which starts from Jyoti the village girl in Hasnapur, to Jasmine, the city woman, to Jazzy, the undocumented immigrant, to Jase, the Manhattan Nanny, to Jane, the Iowan woman who enters the story” (p. 527). Agrawal (2011) notes Mukherjee delineating the male/female dichotomy in *Jasmine* in these words, “She focuses in her novels on the particular on the male/female dichotomy and the continuing colonization of female identity in contemporary patriarchal societies” (para. 3).

These criticisms reflect that Mukherjee sketch female characters who refuse to be ideal, submissive, passive, docile, self-effacing women and the angel because they strive for an identity of their own. In this struggle for identity, they are victimized by alienation. From the observation of several critics, it becomes clear that Mukherjee's attempt of adopting Western feminist values is problematic, arguing that she idealizes the United States at the expense of her homeland. Hence, the research gap lies in observing the fiction from the postcolonial and feminist perspectives. And the research paper aims at filling the gap by analyzing the fiction from these perspectives.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The paper reads Jasmine's character not as an alien woman in the West, but as a protagonist whose actions verify a strong immigrant Indian female subject-position in the postcolonial context of America. Mukherjee's Jasmine is basically a story of transformation from the fragmentation to the coherence self (Sharma, 2016). Mukherjee exhibits the potential to change what it means to be “American,” and the identity she negotiates is as much a political stance towards ethnic American identification as it is a commentary on the world both Jasmine and her author left behind. Postcolonial literature explores issues of history, identity, culture, gender, and immigration (Bhabha, 1994). It is apparent that this novel cannot be interpreted without exploring the issues of history, identity, culture, gender, and immigration, particularly in regard to Mukherjee's work as a writer. Mukherjee's experiences reveal many of the attitudes towards Indian and North American cultures that shape Jasmine's development as a postcolonial, immigrant heroine.

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement (Bhabha, 1994). For Jasmine's family, an acute sense of loss and displacement defines the post-partition, postcolonial condition. It is tragic to read that Jasmine's family was kicked out of their comfortable lifestyle with the upper-middle class lifestyle in Lahore to move into a poor village. This is narrated by Jasmine in these words:

Marajo, my mother, couldn't forget the Partition Riots. Muslim sacked our house, Neighbors' servants tugged off earrings and bangle defiled Grottoes sobered my grandfather's horse. Life shouldn't have turned out. That way! I've never been to Lahore, but the loss survives in the instant Replay of my family

story: forever Lahore smokes, forever my parents Flee. (p. 41)

The trauma of this departure force Jasmine's parents into an exile that makes her mother distrustful and pessimistic, and that her father in particular never comes to accept. Her father is a representative of patriarchy. Patriarchy is probably the oldest form of exploitation of one part of the population by another (Ruth, 1990). Jasmine narrates, her father's "perpetual attachment to Lahore in the karats he continued to wear, the Pakistani radio broadcasts he listened to, and his disgust for anything not related to Lahore" (p. 41). In the next generation, this trauma replays itself – more and more violently each time– throughout Jasmine's life in India.

However, she continues, "Lacking a country, avoiding all the messiness of rebirth as an immigrant eventually harms even the finest sensibility" (p. 29). Although her words have given their context in a review aimed at a new direction for minority American literatures, they lack the empathy we might expect in a discussion of trauma. Gomez (1995) writes that "the traumatic event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it (p. 5). Jasmine's father clearly exhibits the symptoms of exile-as-trauma; then Mukherjee argues that by embracing duality we might learn how to be two things simultaneously; to be the dispossessed as well as the dispossessor, thereby working through this exile as trauma.

Jasmine's freedom and subjectivity are associated with the concept of identity crisis. She wanders here and there as a nomad. According to Chowdhury (1995), the nomads "travel like wanderers, we shop and surf the Internet like wanderers, our technologies of communication release us from locality, and when we use them, we defy the physical worlds that tie us to territory" (p. 91). Jasmine's words at the end of the description of her father illustrate this attitude towards her dispossession: "He will never see Lahore again and I never have. Only a fool would let it rule his life" (p. 43). Jasmine attempts to be detached from her father's homeland in a state of her exile. Instead, she embraces the challenging life of an immigrant when she comes to the U.S. Jasmine refuses to believe the astrologer's argument that one is helpless against fate. Jasmine trips and falls as she runs away, is cutting her forehead when it hits the floor and her sister's shriek when they see her: "Now your face is scarred for life! How will the family ever find you a Husband" (pp. 4-5)? Dislocation, resulting from migration, erodes a strong and active sense of self (Gaandhi, 1998). Jasmine's dislocation also erodes her strong and active sense of self; and she prefers to elucidate her own life. She interprets and "resists the implications of the astrologer's pronouncement, refusing to believe that she was nothing, a speck in the solar system, helpless, doomed" (pp. 3-4).

Jasmine's identity at the beginning was confined with the patriarchal gender norms that she tries to overcome throughout her journey in the novel. Women in patriarchal society are insulted just because they give birth to a girl (Beauvoir, 1983). Jasmine says, "If I had been a boy, my birth in a bountiful year would have marked me as lucky, a child with a special destiny to fulfill. But daughters were curses... and dowries beggared families for

generations" (p. 39). The first obstacle women have to overcome is the dowry necessary for a marriage. Jasmine states, "all over our district, bad luck dogged dowry-less wives, rebellious wives, and barren wives... fell into wells, they got run over by trains, they burned to death heating milk on kerosene stoves" (p. 41). This indicates how women's bodies were taken as the submissive organism in terms the traditional gender dynamics. Jasmine was the fifth daughter of her family and unwanted. Jasmine struggles to resist the oppression. Unable to provide for her five daughters dowries, Jasmine's mother complained, "God's cruel...to waste brains on a girl" (p. 40). The human psyche itself is colonized by the misogynistic culture (Moi, 1985). Jasmine's mother was also colonized by the misogynistic culture. She wanted to provide a prosperous life for her daughter. But the patriarchal culture shatters her dream. When strongly deterministic, Jyoti reveals her aspiration to be a doctor, "I want to be a doctor" (p. 5) and set up a clinic, her father devaluates her ambition and proclaims her as being a mad. Moreover, Jasmine's grandmother, Dida, utters, "Blame the mother. Insanity has to come from somewhere. It's the mother who is mad" (p. 51). It is not the father but the mother is to be blamed for the cause of their children.

Though Jasmine's early life is dominated by patriarchal values, she never falls back to show her fighting spirit whether in her early life in India or during her exile. She survives "innumerable beginnings and ends" (Ponzanesi, 2004, p. 39). Jasmine endeavors to challenge and conquer her new lifestyle all the time. Jasmine marries her brother's friend, Prakash Vijn at fourteen because she had fallen in love with his voice at the beginning. Prakash, dissimilar to other male characters in the society, was a modern man who believed, "there's no room in modern India for feudalism" and "only in feudal societies is the woman still a vessel" (p. 77). He had no problem when Jyoti called him by his name while other women in the village used to address their husbands with some respectful pronouns. He wanted to break down Jyoti she had been in Hasnapur and make her a new kind of city woman as she says, "To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine" (p. 77). Now, she finds herself shuttled between identities: Jyoti and Jasmine. As her identity is confused, she is trapped within tradition and modernity. Prakash argued, "We aren't going to spawn! We aren't ignorant peasant when she wanted to be pregnant" (p. 77). She intends to learn English because this will have an elitist and a transformative effect in her life. When she meets Prakash, her would-be husband, her prime concern is his fluency in English and "She herself sat with old copies of newspapers and practiced English phrases" (p. 77). The 1980s was the period of great tension in Punjab because the Sikh terrorists roamed about the Panjab planting bombs. Prakash, when preparing to study in America, was killed by a Sikh terrorist's bomb. After Prakash's death, Jasmine plans burn herself alive, as a good, traditional Hindu wife did in the past. But, determined to fight her destiny, Jyoti begins to empower herself through learning English, for whom "to want English was to want more than you had been given at birth; it was to want the world" (p. 68).

The narrative moves between past and present, between the narrator's early life in India and her present life in America. The past is Jyoti's childhood in the small village of Hansapur, Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vijn and consequences leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in Baden, Iowa

where she is a “live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer” (Kumar, 2001, pp. 107-8), a small town banker. The new environment plays a major role in the transformation of an individual’s identity (Bhabha (1994). Jasmine’s environment also plays a vital role in the transformation of her identity from one status to another. When Prakash marries her, he wants her to become a modern city woman and as he aids her in her transformation from ‘Jyoti’ to ‘Jasmine’ she both perceives herself as, and eventually becomes the figure that Prakash desires to create. Her renaming is a symbol of sign of her efforts to adjust in a foreign land. When Sikh terrorists murder Prakash, Jasmine immigrates to America all alone to fulfill her husband’s mission and wants to perform ‘sati’ by cremating herself on the pyre of his suit. At the shore of Florida, when the captain of the ship gives her disrespectful treatment, she experiences the first taste of American racial segregation. Half-Face, the captain of the ship, sees her only as a sexual being and rapes her. She narrates the trauma in these words:

He looked at me, and at the suitcase...He hefted the bag onto the bed and unsnapped the catches. Out came my sandalwood Ganpati. He propped it up against a picture on the dresser. He noticed my photo album and picked it up. Pictures of Prakash and of Pitaji, wrapped in an old sari... At the bottom, the blue suit.

‘Who’s this for?’ he demanded. ‘A kid?’ ‘It is my husband’s’, I said.

‘Kind of a scrazy little bastard, ain’t he?’ He laughed and dropped the jacket back in the suitcase. (pp. 113-14)

After the rape, she finds that she cannot escape this new perception of her identity. The women have the potential to protest the sexual assault and exploitation (Ruth, 1990). Jasmine becomes so fierce by the assault that she kills Half Face. She feels everything that is dear to her is invaded by the dirty hands of Half Face. Therefore, she burns him in a metal trash bin adhering to a sati ritual before leaving the place. In this act she finds the strength to continue living and vows to start a new life in America, separate from India and the naive identity of her past. As Burton (2007) argues, instead of taking her life, she kills a part of her old identity in order to be born again. Her murderous tendencies are enacted on the man who had smuggled her into the US and subsequently violated her. “In the novel’s epiphanous episode, she transforms from the role of Sita as a compliant, dutiful and obedient wife, to that of Kali- messenger of death, source of destructive energy, provider of renewal and re-birth”(p. 88). But in the course of her journey, she slits her rapist in the form of goddess Kali and begins a new journey. After killing him, Jasmine moves on at the house of Lillian Gordon, a lady who shelters her. Staying with Gordon, she begins her process of assimilation by learning how to become American. There she gets nickname ‘Jazzy’, a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes gladly. After that, she goes to New York where she first works as a day-care provider to Taylor and Wylie’s adopted daughter, Duff. There she gets another identity; Taylor calls her ‘Jase’. Jase’s friendship with Taylor grows. While living with the Hayes, she begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture.

Jasmine goes through many transformations and endeavors to manipulate herself as an American. She sustains herself in an alien country by her own efforts. Jafir (2015), in this context argues,

A strong woman, Jasmine navigates in an apparently effortless manner between time, location, memory, desire and self -perception and re-creates herself without disintegrating. Through the horrendous ordeals such as assassinations, clandestine immigration, rape, murder, and constant displacements, and so on that she undergoes, she retains her stability and emerges unbroken if not unscathed. (p. 59)

Jasmine is determined to challenge even fate. She sets out from the suppressive, patriarchal Indian tradition to the western society to liberate her life. She moves into America with forged documents, learns English and appears successfully as a transformed woman. In her journey for the disintegrated self, she suffers from various vulnerabilities.

Jasmine is rescued by a Quaker woman, Lillian Gordon, who helps illegal immigrants to survive in the United States. She not only gives Jasmine new hopes, she also teaches her how to walk and talk in American ways so that the immigration officials would not recognize her as illegal entry. Gordon becomes a secret guide to her which helps her to start a new life in the United States without being caught by the immigration authority. Jasmine tries hard to imitate American ways under Gordon’s instructions. She iterates, “I worked hard on the walk and deportment” (p. 133) as Mrs. Gordon instructed her. Gordon advises Jasmine during her stay with her, “Let the past make you wary by all means. But do not let it deform you” (p. 131). So, this advice from Gordon is very important for her that she has to learn from the past and make her future. Mrs. Gordon gives Jasmine her daughter’s clothes, shelter and new American identity by renaming her ‘Jazzy’. At this juncture, Jasmine undergoes a physical transformation as well. The American clothes help to “disguise her widowhood” (p. 145). Her new look and clothes make her act and behave more like an American woman.

In the postcolonial world, characters suffer from the perplexity of ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994). Living in the ambivalent alien world, Jasmine strives to set her new identity in the mainstream American society. She does not believe in the fixed identity rather accepts the fluidity of immigrants’ identity. Jasmine metamorphoses from one identity to another. She must go through several rebirths and renaming to assume the American identity. Jasmine possesses the essential characteristics to adapt to an American life in order to survive in America.

Jasmine spends five months in Professor Vadhera’s house in New York. With the help of Vadhera, she attempts to get “a green card though a forged one” (p. 148). Jasmine says, “I wanted a green card more than anything else in the world that a green card was a freedom” (p. 149). After getting the forged green card, Jasmine leaves Professor Vadhera’s apartment and “takes one more plunge into America” (p. 146) seeking to make her own living.

Jasmine gets a chance to work as caregiver to Duff, the little daughter of Wylie and Taylor. She obtains another identity, ‘Jase’ from Taylor and “starts her transformation into a sophisticated American woman” (p. 611). She becomes more intimate to Taylor. For Taylor and Wylie, “[she] wanted to become the person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful” (p. 171). In fact, Jasmine desires to challenge the reality, the past, and wants to reconstruct the future. She desperately wants to change

herself. She wants to be “cosmopolitan, and refined. She wants to be the person as they see in the present not as in the past” (Remigio, 2008, p. 55).

Postcolonial people are characterized by mimicry (Bhabha, 1994). Jasmine continues to say, “All become my language, which I learned like a child, from the first words up” (p. 174). Jasmine is learning American culture and lifestyle. It is because she has to make her independent identity in an alien culture. Jasmine’s intimacy with Taylor and her desire for belongingness does not remain long lasting when she encounters the Sikh terrorist, Sukhwinder who had killed her husband Prakash, observing her. After meeting Sukhwinder in New York, she lives sentimentally. The past creeps in her memory, she loses her sense of self-expression and being unable to live with plethora of conflicting identities, she decides to move to Iowa to give her life new beginning where she meets Bud Ripplemeyer, a banker, and stays with him. Her main reason for running away is the fear that her presence in their household may jeopardize the safety of Taylor and Duff. “She runs away for life, not escaping from life” (Umadevi, 2012, p. 611), which is again the positive step. There she becomes a caregiver to Bud and Du, a sixteen-year old Vietnam War victim, adopted by Bud. Bud renames Jasmine as ‘Jane’, yet another sign of her evolution.

When a person is trapped in between duality and ambivalence, his continuous effort to rise above the subaltern status plays a great role in his life in establishing her identity (Gaandhi, 1988). Jasmine maintains herself as a subversive resistant woman whether against the fortune teller’s prediction of her future or the rapist Half-Face later on. On the other hand, she remains a victim throughout the text. As Umadevi (2012 indicates, “in the first half of the novel, she is the victim of her third world father and the first world rapist; in the second half, she is the victim of author’s colonizing narrative perspective” (p. 88). Jasmine is trapped in between duality and ambivalence, her continuous effort to rise above the subaltern status plays a great role in her life in establishing her identity. The process of transformation as Jyoti, Jasmine and Jane is figuratively centered in the death of one’s own self and the birth of new self. It is a motif, a symbolism of cyclical patterns of birth, death and rebirth in this context of postcolonial immigrant woman’s life (Tandon, 2004). Jasmine’s mobility from one self to another is operated by the necessities of her existence. She shows the power to assimilate with different circumstances to make her existence. Jasmine utters, “I had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali” (p. 197). Each time she gets a new life. Erten (2013) states, “living for today becomes Jasmine’s motto in America where nothing lasts forever, but learning how to live for herself and today, and bringing her fragmented self together is her challenge” (p. 37). This is clear in her words:

Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff’s day mummy and Taylor and Wylie’s au pair in Manhattan; that Jasmine isn’t this Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch with Mary Webb at the University Club today. And which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms? (p.127)

Once she was married she became Jasmine, someone with no trace of the small village girl she once was. However, when she killed the man that raped her on her journey from India to America, she discards altogether the remains of anything that she held close from India. Jasmine comes to the point of physical reincarnation because she cleanses her body and soul through a generous act and obtains clarity.

Thus, through Jasmine, Mukherjee wants to convey the message that change, transformation, fluid identity, adaptability and finally assimilation are keys to the survival of immigrants. Death of Jasmine’s different selves presents the fragmented life that the immigrants have to go through. Jasmine, in the novel, according to Warhol (2011) is “neither Indian, nor American, both Indian and American; she enacts the cosmopolitan identity” (p. 53). The novel, in fact, presents Jasmine’s search for unfragmented identity through assimilation, though at every stage of her life there is terror, violence and fear. She experiences cultural conflict, and always struggles for some new identity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mukherjee’s novel, *Jasmine* depicts the cultural perplexity of an individual living in foreign country. The fiction records the pain and excitement of an individual in his or her quest for identity and settlement in an alien world. Most of the writings of Mukherjee reflect an Indian microcosm, supplied with Indian food, dress, traditions, customs, and languages in the western countries. A reader of Mukherjee can mark her works portraying the women’s plight in the transitional stages. *Jasmine* narrates the pathetic perceptions of the immigrants living in American societies. Mukherjee is not concerned to dismantling or challenging American society and culture, power and privilege. However, she challenges the exclusivity and abuses of the westerners towards the easterners. As the protagonists move into new and different places, they come to understand that the attitude to hold the singular identity is fallacious because the diasporic experience, and the indeterminate, multiple cultures substitute their singular identity. But ironically the multiplicity turns out to be the plight of the characters, because their diverse consciousnesses shatter their pristine consciousness Mukherjee’s characters with different socio-cultural experiences relate to a process involving complex negotiation and exchange. Mukherjee always has a concern that the new identity should not suffer from marginalization and suppression from any society. To avoid such circumstances she portrays her characters with qualities like individualism, independence, courage and decisiveness. While moving from India to America and from America to India and while preparing for her return to America again, Jasmine experiences alienation, disjuncture, sense of loss, displacement and homelessness. This shows that people move to different places or *they* live at some fixed places according to familial values of loyalty and trust while the rest seems to offer her only dubious physical relationship.

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