



Study of Mukherjee's Work in Relation to the Dire Situation of Indian Female Immigrants

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Abstract: This research paper examines the deep analysis of women's consciousness, self-discovery, and immigrant experiences among the male-dominated society through Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine and Wife*. It also attempts to tackle the traumatic experiences and cultural perplexity of first- and second-generation immigrants. Novels by Bharati Mukherjee depict the plight of immigrant women to the US and Canada in a vulnerable manner. She persuasively and compassionately addresses the predicament of the migrants—the issues of alienation, loneliness, and exile they face in their chosen country of residence. Her female characters reinvent themselves in multinational societies, like Canada and America, where they are snubbed and regarded as tedious.

When does a person leave their house? Various migrant novels show how literature can challenge prejudices and offer new insights on the challenges of global migration. This seemingly simple topic deserves a more nuanced response. We will examine the socio-political issues that determine the status of an Indian woman in other countries through the migration narrative in this paper. As a result, we can see that movement and human restlessness have had a remarkable effect on literature as well. Particularly when a woman steps out of the homeland to alien land, it's a matter of astonishment for all. This led to a new genre: migration literature.

In contemporary parlance, "migration" refers to the tendency of people moving and displacing themselves in search of greater personal convenience.

This dissertation intends to address the anguish of exile, alienation, and isolation as well as the final liberation of transformation—a crucial aspect of migration—by attempting to relate the many diverse challenges that women migrants face in Bharati Mukherjee's novel.

Keywords: Indo-American, Indo-Fijian, migration, narratives, feminism.

Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indo-American author and one of the most prominent voices in diaspora literature, brings the struggles of Indian immigrants, especially women, to the forefront through her works. Through novels such as *Jasmine* and *Wife*, Mukherjee explores the psychological and emotional turmoil of immigrant women who confront alienation, cultural displacement, and the challenge of self-identity in foreign lands. This research paper examines the deep analysis of women's consciousness, self-discovery, and immigrant experiences, highlighting the trauma and cultural perplexity faced by first- and second-generation immigrants. Through Mukherjee's fiction, we gain insight into how migration, particularly of women from India to North America, is not just a physical relocation but also an intense journey of psychological reinvention and survival.

Mukherjee is a diasporic writer and her main focus is to bring out the conflict and the suffering of the women who have settled abroad. Her novels are women centred, though she uses a large number of male characters in order to portray the world of her female protagonist. Mukherjee's women characters are people from the periphery of society who chose to spend their lives in an alien country. Mukherjee's *Jasmine* explores the socio-political issues that determine the position on American identity through the migration narrative of its title character. Several well-known scholars find out what they interpret as Mukherjee's celebration of assimilation and adoption of Western feminist values problematic, arguing that she idealizes the United States at the expense of her homeland. Moreover, these critics contend that *Jasmine's* development relies on American and European models of personal success, thereby reinforcing notions of the ever-victimized "third world" woman rescued by liberal Western values.



Bharati Mukherjee, the author of six novels, two collections of short stories, and a smattering of nonfiction works, reflects personal experience in crossing cultural boundaries in her almost all writings. The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation, and disorientation make Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Jasmine* "a quest for identity and search for the roots" in an alien land. This paper discusses how the protagonist of the novel, undergoes several transformations during her life journey in America, which results in a fluid state of identity.

Mukherjee's novels have contributed significantly to the genre of migration literature, offering a nuanced response to the migrant experience. Her characters—particularly the female protagonists—navigate the complexities of transitioning from their native culture to a new, often hostile, environment. This paper will explore how Mukherjee's representation of Indian immigrant women challenges societal norms and highlights the intersection of gender, culture, and migration in a globalized world. By focusing on *Jasmine* and *Wife*, we will examine how Mukherjee portrays the conflicting dynamics of alienation, isolation, and liberation in the lives of Indian women immigrants.

Bharathi Mukherjee's heroines are intrepid and firm. They have the strong potentiality for compliance; they live in the dense land of actuality and accept the sour truth of their live. Dimple in *Wife* fails to stride the conduit or play the societal roles traditionally assigned to an Indian woman. She is a symbol of an emblematic, acquiescent Indian housewife who patiently abides all the plights afflicted on her by the male dominated society

Migration and Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's Works

Migration literature, as a genre, has gained prominence in recent decades, particularly as global movements of people have become more common. For many individuals, migration is an act of both survival and reinvention, and it carries profound emotional and psychological consequences. The term Diaspora refers to the scattered religion or ethnic groups away from their home land either forced or voluntary. However, in today's world it is mean that any community which is spread in other country for quenching their desires of living a quality life. Her husband Prakash got killed in a bomb blast which was heartbroken news for Jasmine at the age of seventeen. Jasmine hears Prakash's voice which motivates her from every corner of room



“there is no dying, there is only as ascending or a descending, a moving on to other planes. Don’t crawl back to Hasanlu and feudalism that Jyoti is dead” (Jasmine 86).

Jasmine is novel written by Bharati Mukherjee, set in the 1980s novel is the manifestation of a young Indian woman who breaks off all the chains of Patriarchy and represents herself as the symbol of strength. Author herself owns an experience of dislocation and displacement in her life helping in record the immigrant’s experience in the novel Jasmine. Cultural crisis is such a big issue in Bharati Mukherjee’s life also that’s why she expressed her feelings of alienation, adaptation of culture and custom through her novel Jasmine. Jasmine different types name like Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane shows cross- cultural identity. As a protagonist Jasmine starts her life journey from a very small village in India to the abroad like US. Her life journey is full of tragic accidents like murder, rape and illicit relationships. According to Jasmine, Prakash is different from others he wants Jasmine to come out fear and he said, “You are small and sweet heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume” (Jasmine 77). Prakash motivates Jyoti to learn English and he also gives a new identity and new life to Jasmine. “He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I’d been in Hasanpur and makes me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine... Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities” (Jasmine 77). Jasmine found to be based on the prior short story in the middleman and other stories.

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been in Hasanpur and makes me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine... Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities” (Jasmine 77).

Jasmine, a seventeen-year-old widow, found herself thrust into a profound journey of self-discovery after the brutal assassination of her husband in a bomb blast. Shaken by the tragedy, Jasmine took time to emerge victorious from the darkest phase of her life. In the male-dominated Indian society, a woman's identity is often defined by the man she is associated with. Even in 2020, a woman's sense of self is often overshadowed by the need to be defined by a man. Yet, Jasmine, like a phoenix, rose from the ashes and bravely planned her new journey alone, feeling self-sufficient despite the many hurdles she faced. Life's unpredictability proved to be a challenging, but ultimately empowering, force in Jasmine's path of self-exploration.

In *Jasmine* (1989), the protagonist, Jasmine, is a young woman from Punjab who migrates to the United States in search of a better life. Her journey from India to the US is marked by loss, trauma, and the constant reinvention of her identity. The novel explores Jasmine's psychological transformation as she moves through multiple identities—Jasmine, Jazzy, and Jane—each reflecting her evolving understanding of herself in relation to the world around her. As an immigrant woman, she faces the challenges of assimilation in a society that is indifferent, often hostile, to her existence as an outsider. The way her identity change without realisation that her sole self is being lost, Mukherjee through her female character Jasmine tries to show real kind of real picture of a women or especially Indian women. As we see in India normally how an identity of a women changes without her prior permission, everyone around her tries to change her or mould in a certain frame according to the stereotypes of society. Throughout the novel we see how the name of JYOTI changes every now and then, only because other person does not like her name be it Prakash, Bud or Lillian Gordon and with change in her name they want change her also.

Similarly, in *Wife* (1975), the character of Dimple Dasgupta experiences cultural displacement and disillusionment after marrying an immigrant man and relocating to the United States. The novel delves into the emotional and psychological turmoil of a woman who feels trapped in a restrictive marriage and an unfamiliar society. Dimple's life is marked by the tension



between her traditional Indian upbringing and the realities of her new life as an immigrant in the US. Through Dimple's story, Mukherjee highlights the struggles of Indian women who are doubly marginalized—as women in a patriarchal society and as immigrants in a foreign land.

Mukherjee's novel *Wife* reveals the yarn of Dimple, an ostensibly tame young Bengali girl who is full of dreams about her married life and so she fervently and anxiously waits for marriage. She thinks that marriage is a blessing in camouflage. It will bring her sovereignty, kismet and glee. At last, her father Mr. DasGupta married her daughter with Amit Basu, an engineer, by scouring matrimonial advertisements. Basu's house is not striking, so she does not feel easy there. She doesn't like Amit's mother and sister also. Her mother-in-law dislikes her name 'Dimple' and wants to call her 'Nandini'. Dimple Basu has always lived in an implausible world, a world which is created by herself. But when she brazens out the hard realities of life the naps of her imagination are clipped. Amit was not the man Dimple has imagined for her husband.

Through these novels, Mukherjee illustrates how migration is a process of constant self-reinvention, particularly for women who are expected to conform to traditional gender roles in both their home and host countries. The trauma of displacement is not just a physical experience but an emotional and psychological one that forces women to navigate their identity through shifting landscapes of cultural expectations.

Alienation and Loneliness: The Plight of Immigrant Women

The profound sense of alienation that immigrants feel in their new surroundings is one of the main themes of Mukherjee's writings. For women, who experience additional difficulties as a result of gender and cultural norms, this estrangement is more severe. The protagonist of *Jasmine* is clearly alienated as she tries to make sense of her past in India and her current situation in America. She must cope with a sensation of not belonging in either environment, thus her journey is not just physical but also emotional. Jasmine's alienation is shown by Mukherjee as occurring both inside, as she struggles with her identity, and outside, as she faces social rejection in a foreign country. As a woman who suddenly goes to a world which is very different to hers, becomes widow within a very short span of marriage in a new country. Jasmine is one of the



such characters which we can say is brave but at the same time a lot self-doubt which results in changing her character or every time she met a new person, that gave gives her a new name according to their convince and she moulds herself according to that name and person, She was not JYOTI after marriage with Prakash. Being in a country which is not her native made alienated from her roots, and eventually she lost herself in order to overcome loneliness that she felt after her husband died led to grope over people to find that affinity, she did not go to India back because in Indian people doses not see widows with good intentions. Jasmine was not happy to live as a sati or widow in white sari so she says, “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” (Jasmine 145). Renaming is to be continued she becomes as the new version of herself every time. She caught between two world identity the first one is “Nativity” and the second one was an “Immigrant”.

Similarly, in *Wife*, Dimple’s alienation is portrayed through her emotional detachment from her husband and her inability to find her place in American society. Despite being married to a man who shares her immigrant experience, Dimple’s sense of loneliness is profound. She feels disconnected from her husband and isolated from the larger society, unable to form meaningful relationships. Her alienation is further compounded by her struggles to adapt to a society that does not understand or accept her cultural background. Mukherjee in a very profound way showed the physic sate of immigrant women, Dimple failed miserably to assimilate with America: what problems and trauma she undergoes while living at a place where she is felts not attachable and her husband also not likes her. The way Dimple kills herself by stabbing herself seven times is very distressing.

Writer such Charlottle Perkins in her short story the yellow Wallpaper, in this short story we also see that the protagonist who is not even named throughout the story to show that the name of a women dose not matter to anyone, as if she does not have the any identity of herself, the protagonist of this novel also kills herself in a very disturbing as she became mentally unstable because of his emotionless husband who only wants to control her.



Same as in the case of Wife, Watching Television made her more psychic. She always used to get the thoughts like rape, somebody breaking the window and coming into her room. When Amit pointed out at her foolishness she says: “In America anything is possible. You can be raped and killed on any floor.” (Wife p129) As the novel proceeds we find lot of change in Dimple’s behaviour. She started going out with Ina and Milt a foreigner. She adopts western outfit, wears purple-coloured tinted sunglasses. Each and every encounter of Dimple with Milt brought them closer. She started extra marital affair with Milt. “The purple tinted sunglasses are perhaps the most typical index of American culture. For Dimple, they are a disguise, borrowed from the west, just like Marsha’s clothes and the apartment in which she is living”. This relation makes her neurotic and fails to differentiate between the real life and the picture depicted on Television. She also becomes alienated.

Asnani described the mental state of Dimple as ‘dilemma of cultures’- “Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife, between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self- effacing.” Whenever she used to feel lonely Dimple felt of committing suicide. She started embracing all evil kind of thoughts like darkness, evil, sinter- murder, suicide. Like a Television advertisement she wants to get rid of her life. Except media she doesn’t want to trust anyone. Even “Her own body seemed curiously alien to her filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” (Wife p 117).

Mukherjee’s portrayal of female immigrants highlights the emotional toll of exile and loneliness. For women, migration often entails not only the loss of a familiar environment but also the dismantling of their roles within their family and community. In both *Jasmine* and *Wife*, the protagonists are forced to confront their own emotional vulnerabilities, as they are removed from their traditional support systems and placed in unfamiliar, often unwelcoming environments.



Marriage as the Medium of Exploitation

In her work, Mukherjee attempts to depict the true and sinister side of women's lives, particularly those who are compelled to leave their home countries for marriages arranged by their families. Her female characters who migrate suffer from a number of traumas and transformations, but they must undergo through a great deal of upheaval before they can finally become free. She also shows what a girl undergoes during the process of Indian arrange marriage system. In case of Dimple she since her childhood was being told that she was fair enough to look beautiful or find a groom, she doubted herself throughout her life and the fact that she is a girl from a city, didn't have any exposure from outside world, was compelled to marry a Stanger who was not of her choice, and due to his fiancé job, it was important to move in with in London where she felt completely lonely ad depressed, being a Indian girl she also does not have any say on whether she liked that boy or not as her choice was a neurosurgeon but she ends marrying an engineer because her father wanted to. Despite marriage being union of two souls, it was more of a business deal.

In Mukherjee's world, the vision of 'marriage-as-prison' is not restricted to India. On the Indian side, the problems of marriage are also present but in a tragic form. Home is a prison to her and she feels at home in nature, so home is not a place of protection and love and security; all these roles are subverted. Marriage is one of the main social conventions in India, but hypocrisy is the key word which rules in her novels. Her aggravation is built up gradually by the circumstances. She resents being wife in the Basu family and rebels against wifedom in many ways. One such way is here including a miscarriage by skipping herself free from her pregnancy, which she views as a Basu's chattels even in her womb. She aspires for self-recognition and dream fulfilment. But Basu behaves in a diverse way. He wants her to be conjugal and docile. So, Dimple hates Basu and his behaviour. He needs her only for sexual pestering. She feels it's a sort of culpable. Finally, in her mentally disconcert state, she kills Amit in an act of self-liberation and eventually commits suicide.

The Indian women have been accepting their husbands with their flaws and trying to live up to their desires and demands by transforming and melding themselves. The chains of



traditional marriage are heavy and the escape routes are not available to a wife, who often seeks consolation and refuge in obsessions, masochisms or mental slavery often leading to her physical decay and death. She is supposed to bear her exploitation and suffering with willing fortitude. But Dimple is fantasizing about marriage, not to an engineer, but to a neurosurgeon. She imagines it will bring her freedom, love, and a more desirable life.

Life has so far been simply a rehearsal for real life, the kind of real life that comes with marriage; for marriage brings opportunities that single women are denied in Indian culture, and Dimple longs for those freedoms more than anything. Dimple worries that she is not fair or bosomy enough for marriage. She felt that Amit had no love for her because she didn't have the longish face of a learned woman. "She groped for the right words, then remembering Ina and Milt, she pounced on an English word and trotted it out the way Ina had done on a more eventful day. You just aren't supportive, if you know what I mean. You're nuts," Amit retorted. But he took his notebook out of his pyjama pocket and scribbled down a word. Dimple tried to sidle closer to him so she could make out what he had written. Could he be writing down her word, adding it to his list of words to show off in company? Revenge! Revenge! (p208)" Dimple is by nature contemptible and docile. She seeks to please him and to save her marriage. She clings to the moments of response and communiqué. She is willing to accept her role as a traditional wife and does not seek anything outside marriage.

But as novel moves towards end we see that Dimple kills his husband Amit and in away feels liberated from being in Marriage prison but eventually she also commits suicide.

Exile and Transformation: The Final Liberation

While alienation and loneliness are prominent themes in Mukherjee's work, the novels also emphasize the potential for transformation that comes with migration. Both *Jasmine* and *Wife* illustrate how migration can lead to a profound sense of liberation, albeit through a difficult and often painful process. For Mukherjee's female characters, migration is not just about escaping the constraints of their native cultures but also about asserting their agency in a world that offers them limited power.



Jasmine's story is one of reinvention. The novel *Jasmine* whose opening phrase is "lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree in the village of Hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears-his satellite dish to the stars- and foretold my widowed hood and exile. I was only seven then, fast and venturesome, scabrous-armed from leaves and thorns." (Mukherjee 1). The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation, and disorientation make Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* "a quest for identity" in an alien land. Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes several transformations during the journey of her life in America, from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazz to Jane to Jase, and often experiences a deep sense of estrangement, which results in a fluid state of identity. Throughout the novel, she adopts new identities that reflect her changing self-perception. This transformation is a response to the trauma she has experienced—losing her family, her husband, and her sense of security in India. However, her transformation also reflects a deeper process of self-discovery and self-empowerment.

Her transformation starts from a village girl under the shell of her father and brothers to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. But Jasmine's happiness is short-lived. She is widowed. She returns to her family. She has to now choose between the rigid traditions of her family and perform Sati or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America. However, she manages a forged passport for going abroad. Jasmine sets off on an agonizing trip as an illegal immigrant to Florida and thus begins her extended journey of transformations, displacement, and a search for identity. She is trying to adapt the American way of life to be able to survive, and changes her identity several times. In her path, she faces many problems, including rape, and eventually reaches the position of a health professional through a series of jobs.

Many questions are lurking in the margins of this tale, not least regarding the improbability of a young uneducated village girl from Hasnapur, Punjab, blossoming so quickly into the "adventurous Jase" in jeans and T-shirts and sneakers. Jasmine, moreover, appears to be happy to wipe out most of her history, except for occasional memories of her slain husband, Prakash. She has no sentimental longing to return to her homeland: she has the spirit of a true immigrant. Though Jasmine comes to America with the crazy notion of erecting a funeral pyre



for her dead husband's clothes on his university campus and burning herself on it, once again, the idea of sanctioned suicide is rejected when America offers other possibilities. By grasping at the dream of a new life, Jasmine feels compelled to sacrifice most of her original self. Both the ethnicity and the womanhood that she identified with have to be massively reworked. In terms of the complete reconstruction of the self that Jasmine subjects herself to, it appears that to discard the notions of womanhood that she had then nurtured, she needs to discard her ethnicity, tooth only way that she can cope with the freedom of choices thrust upon her, intellectual and sexual, is to see herself within the construct of a new "American" woman.

Mukherjee illustrates how migration can be a catalyst for personal growth, even if it requires immense psychological and emotional labor. Jasmine's final reinvention, as an independent and self-reliant woman, reflects the potential for liberation that comes with migration, as it offers her the chance to redefine her life and identity.

Similarly, in *Wife*, Dimple's journey is one of both internal and external transformation. Though her initial experience of migration is marked by disillusionment and frustration, she eventually finds a sense of agency by confronting the limits placed on her by both her marriage and society. In her struggle for independence and self-assertion, Dimple ultimately experiences a form of personal liberation, suggesting that migration, despite its challenges, can offer women the opportunity for empowerment.

Conclusion

Bharati Mukherjee's works, particularly *Jasmine* and *Wife*, offer a powerful lens through which we can understand the multifaceted experience of Indian female immigrants. Through her portrayal of alienation, trauma, and self-reinvention, Mukherjee gives voice to the often-overlooked struggles of immigrant women. Author Bharati Mukherjee has tried to carve out image of third world countries immigrants who try to establish themselves in the culturally different background Jasmine is one of those survivors, who fights with every odd comes out to be an epitome of modern, independent woman who never believes to rot in patriarchy norms. Jasmine creates a new world with new ideas, values, opinions, beliefs constantly unmarking her past. She keeps on trying to establish herself in a new cultural identity by integrating new desires



.While her novels foreground the pain and dislocation caused by migration, they also highlight the potential for transformation and liberation that migration can bring. The themes of exile, cultural perplexity, and identity transformation are crucial to understanding the migrant experience, and Mukherjee's works provide a nuanced and empathetic exploration of these issues. By focusing on the psychological, emotional, and socio-political dimensions of migration, this paper has attempted to illuminate the complex challenges that Indian women face as they navigate the intersection of tradition, culture, and identity in a globalized world.

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