

## **Liberating oneself and creating Self-identity: An Analysis of Feminist Perspective in Bharati Mukherjee's Novel "Jasmine"**

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**Abstract:** Bharati Mukherjee is a feminist author whose focus is on topics and difficulties affecting South Asian women, notably those in India. She supports the cause of women like her contemporaneous feminist authors, but she is different from them in that her main goal is to outline the issues with cross-cultural difficulties faced by Indian women immigrants. This article explores Bharati Mukherjee's imaginary world, her rich life experience, and a sincere portrayal of it in the form of it. Numerous female characters serve as reflections of the oppression of women and the emancipation of Indian women. She also concentrates on expat women characters who have had a great deal of confusion, harsh experiences, and isolation. The issues faced and the heroine's transformation are discussed in this chapter. In "Jasmine," Jyothi makes this clear. The heroines of Bharathi Mukherjee are brash and confident. They have a high capacity for flexibility; they stand firmly on the basis of reality; and they are willing to face the harsh realities of life. In this article, the author intends to detect, evaluate, and present the current status of women and the issues they encounter both in India and overseas. Through Jasmine, the primary character, an attempt is made to paint a picture of women who are hampered by imposed social and conventional rules and punishments that prevent them from leading lives free of such restrictions. The protagonist highlights social problems that have a global impact. The novel's analysis paints a picture of a woman who is not only victimized by men but also evolves as a character with an unwavering determination

to overcome obstacles in her path. The goal of the article is to address cultural and social concerns through the eyes of a strong, forceful female protagonist who succeeds in bringing about a societal and cultural shift by cinematically portraying her situation.

**Keywords:** Feminism, immigrants, transformation, self-identity, Jasmine.

The feminist movement, which had its start in the 1960s and is still going strong in the 21st century, has produced the historical offshoot known as modern feminist criticism. The concept of feminist literature is not new to the study of English literature. But modern female writers are still fascinated by the subject. Modern feminists investigate the connection between language and gender as well as the problems of explicit and implicit bias against women, much like their forebears. In the social framework of the time, females were supposed to pay their attention to practical chores at home and efforts that enhanced the happiness of their households, especially of their partners. Most of the time, women's academic achievement was not encouraged because it was believed that it could threaten the established female attributes of simplicity and purity. Women faced the threat of expulsion from their surroundings if they voiced against the male-dominated system of gender norms or any other injustice.

Though men and women are two distinct individuals, they have been projected as separate cultural entities with radically diverse experiences in life because of the extreme gender disparity and relatively non-uniform social structure. The following quote from a prominent author, Simone de Beauvoir, sheds insight into the status of the "fairer sex" in our culture: "Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being.... She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other." (25-27)

There has been a lot written about women since the Western feminist movement began in the 1960s. Only a small number of feminist authors contributed to the fight for women's rights against this tyranny. There were several female novelists who used the narrating fiction style as well. Female writers have focused on the intricacies of subjugation, concerns of power in a patriarchal society, and the unfair marginalisation of women, whilst male writers have focused on the individual's dilemma, socioeconomic sociopolitical shifts, and overgeneralization of the feminine. Along with many others, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Alice Munro, and Marilyn French have made significant contributions to the movement and are well-known worldwide as feminist novels. A fresh wave of feminism was born as a result of them. They had an impact on India, which gave rise to a new class of Indian feminists. In Indian English literature, the feminist movement has played a vital role, reflecting the changing roles and difficulties faced by women in society. A female-centered perspective that attempts to convey and comprehend experience from the perspective of feminine sensibility and consciousness is developed in modern Indian fiction. According to Patricia Meyer Specks, "There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries." (48)

Due to their significant contributions to the growth of Indian English novels, Indian women novelists shine just as brilliantly in the galaxy of Indian English novelists as their male counterparts. Women writers like Shobha de, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur, Bharati Mukherjee, Geeta Mehta and Kamala Markandaya, have fostered new awareness, particularly regarding the predicament of the Indian women. With the force of their pen, an entirely fresh phase of English literature in India has begun. We can see the world differently through the lenses of female authors, and with their help, we can see the possibilities for human success. It has

sparked the creation of works that investigate gender injustice, female emancipation, and societal standards. Through their novels, essays, and poems, Indian women writers like Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Das, and Anita Desai have tackled these topics, adding to a larger discussion about feminism within Indian culture. By shedding focus on women's hardships, goals, and accomplishments, these literary works encourage people to consider the intricacies of gender relationships in India.

Bharati Mukherjee, a significant figure in modern literature, has left behind a rich legacy that spans a variety of subjects and stories. Mukherjee, who was born in Calcutta, India, in 1940, travelled the world with her writing. She illuminated the complexity of belonging, migration, and the dynamic nature of contemporary life via her extraordinary narrative. Bharati Mukherjee was raised in a community that was rich in tradition and culture. Her Indian upbringing and subsequent transfer to the United States for more education both significantly influenced the development of her distinctive viewpoint. Her investigation of cultural identity in her writing was shaped by the tension between her Eastern ancestry and Western upbringing.

The vivid imagery, reflective tales, and frank examination of the human psyche that define Mukherjee's literary style. She expertly juggled the personal and the political, frequently touching on topics like migration, integration, gender stereotypes, and the experience of immigrants. Her writings give readers a glimpse into the challenges and victories faced by people negotiating the intricacies of multicultural communities. Dr. Beena Agarwal writes properly that,

Bharati Mukherjee explores new dynamics of man and woman relationship with the uncompromising contempt for 'Sita' and 'Savitri' myths that have been instrumental in determining the predicament of Indian woman. She

defines the issue of woman identity in context of their familial relationship. Her female protagonists are the fine synthesis of sensitive woman and self-aware individuals. (10)

The psychological dimensions of Mukherjee's female figures are most appreciated because of how sensitively she portrays them. Her characters have contrasting religious, racial, and cultural anxieties and are from all over the world. Her female characters suffer from an absence of cultural identification and are also targets of racial and gender persecution. The women in Mukherjee's books, however, are weak beings who prefer to grapple with their own issues rather than strive to rule over their male equivalents. Her works explore the tension between desire and logic, reliant security and independence, and social and psychedelic identity. She places more value on the present than the past because it will influence her future.

In contrast to the traditional point of view that portrays displacement and immigration as a form of lack and the situation worsens in the context of woman immigrants, Mukherjee has spent her more than thirty-year artistic career reconsidering the notion of feminist ideology and immigration as a process of improvement. However, the female characters in her novels are invariably powerful, tenacious, and resolute. Her literature persuades readers that gender is a concept subject to change depending on time, place, and circumstance. She addresses problems relating to women and their identities in society in almost all of her novels. They are common instances of young women, primarily from Third World nations, who retain their aspirations to immigrate to the United States in search of better educational opportunities, greater salaries, and eventually, a permanent home there. The supremacy of patriarchal practices in traditional culture is portrayed, as well as the empowerment

and liberation of females from this predetermined status, in Mukherjee's portrayal of women and their multiple connections.

Almost all her books glorify womanhood, but *Jasmine* (1989) stands out as a primarily feminist work. The main character not only challenges traditional social taboos concerning culture, females, and society but also challenges traditional patriarchal beliefs. She is also able to keep conventionality and modernity in an appropriate equilibrium. Her multiple incarnations and modifications showcase her fiercely feminist spirit/soul. This essay aspires to emulate Bharati Mukherjee's appreciation of women's empowerment. It is also an effort to gain a thorough understanding of the journey of the main character and to present the multifaceted, pitiful, and feminist transformation from rural girl Jyoti to transformed Jasmine of the United States, for whom Mukherjee has served as an inspiration for fighters—women who must change and combat for their own well-being.

Identification implies being identical or similar. These aspects of estrangement and identity are depicted in Mukherjee's works. The protagonist of the author's 1989 book *Jasmine* describes how beliefs about Indian women change when she moves away from the rural setting of her Lahori jat peasant family in Jullundhar region. It is a tale of displacement and relocation since the main character, Jasmine, keeps losing people in order to take on new responsibilities and move further west while losing bits and pieces of her history. She gradually grows by travelling to America and adopting new names, including Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jane, and Jasmine. Every location she visits and every name she uses combine to form a new Jasmine. The way the author describes Jyoti here serves as an example of Indian society, women's difficulties, and migration.

Since the moment she came into the world, Jasmine has been searching for her real personality, individuality, and identity. Eighteen years after the Partition Riots, in the village

of Hasnapur in the Jullandhar area of Punjab, she was born as Jyoti. Jyoti was her family's fifth girl child and the seventh kid in a family of nine, making her an undesired child. As she couldn't bear for her daughter to go through the hardships of being a dowry-less bride, her mother wished her to be slain when she was born. She was nearly killed when she was a little girl so that her family could save her from the difficulties of marriage. She, however, escaped. Jasmine didn't let go of her early recollections. She never forgot about them. In actuality, she used her early memories as a weapon in her struggle with destiny and quest for self-identity. When Jasmine was just seven years of age, an astrologer foretold that she would become a widow and be banished. She did not let destiny bring her down. She always made an effort to rise above irrational assumptions and prejudices that onslaught. She was aware of her ability to struggle, triumph in every conflict, and forge a strong identity even as a young child. Her refusal of a marriage that her father and grandmother were almost ready to settle, and other actions all demonstrated her trust and willingness to move towards the realisation of her future potential. She developed the ability to recognise "permissible rebellion" against social norms, which she would subsequently utilise to her own benefit.

Despite Jyoti's courage and stubbornness, she faced challenges, difficulties, and several obstacles in her search for identity. She was shaped by the cultural context in which she was born, while having the capacity to understand concepts of control and power. And this was the primary motivator behind her decision to frequently conceal her real identity and live up to the stereotypes created by others. She angers her father by revealing her desire to become a doctor. Jyoti didn't let her father's rant about following the rules stop her from sharing a small portion of her goal or aspiration, though. By falling in love and marrying Prakash, a young and aspirational engineer, she partially realised her ambition. He wished for Jyoti to go past her past and become a different kind of woman. Prakash intended to

transform her into a different kind of city lady by dismantling the Jyoti that she had been in Hasnapur. He offered her a new name, Jasmine, to help me move on from the past. And for her, this was the start of an entirely new adventure. After taking on a new identity, Jasmine also attended to her husband's burning desire. Then she understood that she could join the fight to support the prophecy that had followed her since infancy and that she had been attempting to avoid.

She seizes every chance to identify as American since she has learnt to talk and walk like an American. She was fascinated rather than scared by the tension between these two opposing powers, the Indian and the American. Jasmine was glad that she had been able to adjust to the new society, even though the other immigrants were still caught between these two forces. In spite of her erratic identity, Jasmine showed care and affection to those who needed her and who trusted in and supported her thanks to the lessons she learned in the strange land. Jasmine changes into Jase. Sukhawinder, the Khalsa lion who killed Prakash, is finally put to death by her. After that, she changes her name to "Jase" and moves to Iowa. Jasmine's many roles or aspects as Jase and Jase assault the power of women. This power is comparable to Sakthi, who has the ability to demolish and combat all evil. Jasmine has freed herself from the constraints of her family, gender, and caste. She has discovered how to live for herself instead of her husband or kids. Jasmine is a fighter, adaptor, and a survivor. She overcomes challenging conditions, emerges victorious, and establishes a new life in a foreign nation.

Jasmine succeeds in all aspect of her life; she does not let her problems or struggles stand in the way of her personal growth, and she is working to establish her place in society. She tackles every obstacle in her path to get accepted in society, making her a strong feminist. Jasmine comes to understand that a person's actual identity is not determined by whether they



are American or Indian, but rather by their ability to be at peace with themselves. Jasmine's search for her true identity in the novel by Bharati Mukherjee involves metamorphic modifications.

Jasmine doesn't want to adhere to dated customs that have existed for a long time. She has a bright view on life and is unconcerned by the scar on her forehead. She refers to it as her "third eye" and identifies as a wise woman. She will be able to see new planets to discover thanks to her third eye. Mukherjee also demonstrates that women are now fighters who seek to get what they deserve rather than being modest, inconsequential beings who are happy and content with what life has to give. Thus, the new lady has distinct aspirations and goals. Jasmine is a very different young woman today. She never goes back to her old ways of thinking and worrying; instead, she carves out a new road for herself and takes it gradually, facing every challenge with a single spirit. She stated in a conversation with *Bomb* magazine: "I think of Jasmine and many of my characters, as being people who are pulling themselves out of the very traditional world in which their fate is predetermined, their destiny resigned to the stars. Traditionally, a good person accepts this. But Jasmine says, 'I'm going to reposition the stars.'" (The New York Times, 1)

Due to the fact that Mukherjee has addressed concerns of female gender relating to those who immigrate to other nations, many reviewers have regarded her as a feminist writer. She has looked into the opportunities for freedom that women in the new country have. Her female characters are resilient survivors who set out to pursue their goals and aspirations. Mukherjee is a proponent of mental and emotional freedom. All of her novels feature strong, independent people. The female characters reflect her ideas, and she forces them to take courageous actions. Her heroes have broken through the domestic barrier of the house to travel beyond the national boundaries. Mukherjee supports globalisation, referring to the

globe as a global community. When we become a part of a new society, her characters teach us to welcome its people. Her artwork reflects the inevitable transition that occurs when a person moves from their own nation to a distant one. Her protagonists make it obvious that this path includes many ups and downs. All of her main characters are strong, independent women. Thus, she promotes feminism's principles through her characters.

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