



HYBRID MODERNITIES: RECONFIGURING IDENTITY IN MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE*

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Abstract

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) offers a nuanced and layered narrative about migration, trauma, gendered vulnerability, and the constant reshaping of identity. This study investigates how the novel constructs hybrid forms of modernity through the protagonist's multiple border crossings and her continual reinventions. Drawing on the critical frameworks of transnational feminism, modernity and globalization studies, and feminist geography, the paper interprets *Jasmine*'s shifting identities—Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, Jane—as reflective of a transnational subject caught in the tensions between tradition, displacement, and modern aspiration.

Rather than portraying the immigrant woman as a culturally fixed entity, Mukherjee positions *Jasmine* as an evolving figure shaped by international movement, uneven power relations, and cultural negotiations. Through a qualitative and interpretive methodology, supported by thematic and theoretical analysis, this article demonstrates that *Jasmine*'s transformations emerge from the pressures and possibilities of global modernity. Her journey from rural Punjab to various American landscapes illustrates how geography, gender, and globalization intersect to create fractured yet empowered modes of selfhood.

The study argues that Mukherjee's novel does not simply celebrate assimilation. Instead, it imagines identity as an ongoing process that is created, dismantled, and rebuilt at multiple stages of migration. The findings suggest that *Jasmine* becomes a symbol of hybrid modernity which is an identity shaped not by singular roots but by the dynamic, fluid, and transnational forces of the contemporary world.

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*, Hybridity, Transnational Feminism, Globalization, Feminist Geography, Diaspora, Identity Formation.

Introduction

Jasmine by Bharati Mukherjee has been considered as one of the historic writings on south Asian American literature especially in the way it creates a delicate depiction of women negotiating their identities in transnational environments. The novel is an account of the life of a young woman *Jasmine*, who has gone through migration to the United States, but the migration is interspersed with personal turmoil, violence, and constant self-invention. Her move puts her in significantly different social, cultural, and emotional planes all of which reoriented her understanding of self.

The prose by Mukherjee always defies the accepted patterns of the immigrant identity that focus on the maintenance of the cultural origin or the nostalgic belongingness to the native land. This trajectory, which is continued in within the story, *Jasmine*, is further complicated by *Jasmine* showing that the process of reinvention is not a seamless and trauma-free process. The main character experiences a set of different personalities of herself, which are a result of different situations: Jyoti in her village, *Jasmine* with her husband Prakash, Kali after rape, Jase with Taylor, and Jane in Iowa. Such fluidity is indicative of a wider identity of hybrid modernity where identity is constantly being rebuilt in global encounters as opposed to being based on a single cultural or national centre.

To question this phenomenon, the existing research uses theoretical frameworks based on transnational feminism, globalization and modernity scholarship and feminist geography. All these approaches help to understand the way in which Mukherjee creates a protagonist reflecting the blurred identity of a modern-day migrant. As shown in the novel, the sense



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of self that Jasmine has is definitely not a matter of inheritedness but one that occurred within a framework of movement and transformation, as well as being a global construct.

Methodology

This paper will be researched using a multi-theoretical and qualitative approach that integrates transnational feminism, modernity and globalization theory, and feminist geographic approaches. These constructs shed some light on the cultural, gendered, and spatial aspects of the identity changes in Jasmine.

1. Theoretical Foundations

Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminist paradigms disrupt the universal paradigms of feminism that do not take cognizance of the experiences of migrant, postcolonial and non-Western women. Such a perspective preempts the manner to which global circulation, of labor, people and power in particular, determines the experiences of women. In this light, one can see the various reinventions of Jasmine by way of reaction to the forces of patriarchy, migration, race and geopolitical instability. Modernity Studies and Globalization Studies. In the novel, modernity is also not a consistent process but a collection of indifferent and discordant experiences that are determined by global capitalism, technological enhancement and immigration. Studies in globalization also aid in understanding why Jasmine is being exposed to such aspects of the American consumer culture, multicultural life in the cities, and economic forces that facilitate or restrict her movements.

Feminist Geography

Feminist geographers say that space has an impact on identity formation. The places include domestic, urban, rural, and transnational, which determine the gender roles, preferences, and the agency. The space in Jasmine emerges as one of the most important contributors to selfhood as each geographic location produces a variation of the protagonist.

2. Methodological Approach

The research relies on qualitative textual analysis supported by interpretive and thematic methods:

Qualitative Close Reading

Passages that describe transitions, renamings, spatial movements, and emotional ruptures are analyzed to understand how identity is reconstructed.

Interpretive Analysis

Events in the novel are examined through feminist and postcolonial lenses to reveal underlying power structures.

Thematic Coding

Themes such as mobility, trauma, reinvention, gendered violence, and modernization are identified and used to trace Jasmine's evolving identity.

Interdisciplinary Integration

The three theoretical frameworks are woven together to offer a holistic interpretation of hybrid modernity.

Analysis

1. Identity as an Ongoing Process.

The story of life is organized around the repetitive loop of self-identification and it makes Jasmine one of the most vibrant and symbolically loaded heroes of Bharati Mukherjee. Instead of defining what identity is, Mukherjee creates Jasmine as a



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subject, whose life is also made as a multidimensional metamorphosis caused by migration, loss, cultural experiences, and changing power relations. All her names: Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, Jane are the landmarks of a new social environment and emotional world.

As the Jyoti she is at the traditional values of Hasnapur, the duties of the family and the patriarchy in the country. Her process of transforming into Jasmine begins when Prakash makes her dream outside the limits of caste, village life and gendered roles. During this stage Jasmine is exposed to modernity as a source of education, free movement, and cosmopolitan dreams.

After the murder of Prakash and as she faces House in a bloody battle with Half-Face, her self-identification is disintegrated. His metaphorical murdering is what critics have described as ritualistic self-immolation -a self-shedding of the violated self. By chance, when she arrives in New York, her new identity as Jase is the result of a world full of cultural pluralism, liberalism, and emotional warmth, especially when she develops a relationship with Taylor. She further continues to play the role of caregiver and spouse to the traditional American household of Bud later in the conservative Midwest where she assumes the role of Jane.

The transnational feminist theory highlights that such changes are not simple personal rediscoveries but a reaction to the world-systems such as the systems of immigration, patriarchy, racial inequalities, and capitalist dependence. The fluid nature of identity of Jasmine can be used to depict the uncertainty of belonging to migrant women, whose identities they need to negotiate as vulnerable and as agentic persistently. She is an icon of continuous becoming who does not stand well in her categorization but presents identity as something flowing, negotiated and circumstantial.

2. Trauma, Rapture and Creation of New Selves.

The changes of identity of Jasmine cannot be regarded outside the context of the traumas that discontinue her life. Mukherjee anticipates violence, not physical but psychological discontinuity, which causes Jasmine to become something different. The bloodshed of Partition-times conflicts, the killing of Prakash, the rape by Half-face and the threat of illegal immigration all turn out to be the jumpstarts to her rebirths.

Her slaughter of Half-Face is a psychic discontinuity. Following this instance, Jasmine asserts that she is walking dead, a comment that can imply that she is dead and her former persona and the destabilizing liberation of not having a fixed self. This break can be compared with the process of displacement trauma, as outlined by transnational feminist scholars that sees violence in the migration process as a fundamental way of reorganising the subject's sense of self.

The effects of trauma are not only devastating, but also smog into new identities. Every traumatic experience enters her into a different geographical and psychological dimension that makes her shape relationships and survival strategies that redefines her emotional and moral world.

Globalisation scholars point to the fact that these traumas are good companions to migrants traveling without citizenship, formal labour protection, and support networks. The recurring instances of dislocation in Jasmine show the imbalance of global mobility processes through which mobility is unliberating but in many instances, de facto, coerced and dangerous. Her strength however shows how migrant women can create agency out of circumstances created by structural violence.

3. Geographies of Identity A Feminist Spatial Reading.

Feminist geography can be used to explain how the identity of Jasmine is created by the places in which she lives. In his analysis of the narrative, Mukherjee places space as a force, a kind of active force which shapes behaviour, emotions, relationships and self perception.



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Hasnapur

The village upholds gendered restrictions of movement, education and choice. However, it is ironic that it is here where Jasmine experiences a sense of possibility and fate. She envisions other possibilities of the future even in the face of patriarchy and this demonstrates that agency can be produced even at the margins.

Florida

Florida is the ugly side of America: endorseable restaurant labour, sexual aggression and economic marginalisation. It is here she gets to know the precariousness of being undocumented. The fact that she is exposed to racial stratifications and the vulnerability of immigrants makes her more aware of how survival would be a form of political action.

New York City

Jasmine turns into Jase in the cosmopolitan type of setting of Manhattan. Urban heterogeneity, intellectual pluralism and heterography, and feelings of affection that Taylor shows allow her to play with emotional permeability and fluidity of cultures. NYC is a denoted representation of the seductive appeal of modernity, a place where re-invention seems to have no boundaries.

Iowa

The Midwest countryside is molding her into Jane, a woman placed into a conventional, homemaking and emotionally stifling world. She also feels confined even as she finds love and permanency with Bud. The homogeneity of Iowa and the implicit racial codes of the community make her realize that there are certain restrictions to non-white and foreign-born women.

California

California is fluid, and reinventive, and progressive, and the tsunami of world modernity. The fact that she decides to go with Taylor in the end does not just indicate a form of romance but also the fact she does not want to stay stagnant. California is the place of open-ended possibilities in which the next incarnation of Jasmine will be born.

With such changes, Mukherjee shows that space is not neutral. It defines opportunity, constraint, desirability, and emotional existence. The identity of Jasmine is constructed by geography as far as the feminist geographic approach to place and self is that place and self are co-constructed.

4. Global Flows, Modernity and Immigrant Imagination.

The modernity of Jasmine is described as complicated, dreamy and lopsided. In the case of Jasmine, the dream of upward mobility and self-reinvention is the United States. But it also brings out the hypocrisy of global modernity - the presence of opportunity and exclusion.

She confronts:

- Consumer culture which promises to give us empowerment and may alienate at the same time;
- Racialisation that sets her off as a foreigner;
 - Economic insecurity tied to the status of undocumented immigrants;
- Emotional discontinuity associated with displacement;
- Unequal gender expectations, which remain up to date.



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The life of Jasmine is a symbol of many who change their countries in search of the promises of modernity. Mukherjee demonstrates that modernity is not a universal object; it is subject to class, racial, gender and national filters. As an individual, Jasmine exists along the borders of the global capitalism, and she navigates through the fluidity of the system, facing its inequalities.

In this way, she turns into an object of the so-called immigrant imagination; a person who creates a future by improvising, taking risks and adapting, and she is the hope and dislocation of modernity at the same time.

5. Gender, body and transnational power.

The body of Jasmine turns into the place to which several kinds of powers intersect. It is managed, abused, trafficked, wanted, and punished. Her corporeal arousal reveals the mobility of migrant women, which is subject to structural inequality.

Her relationships have complicated relationships of power:

With Prakash, her body is the location of empowerment and contemporary desire;

Through Half-face it becomes an object of manly violence and exploitation;

It is a place of affection, liberation, and emotional protection with Taylor;

In the case of Bud, it will be bound with the attachment to care-taking and home digital.

A transnational feminist reading has put the emphasis on the argument that Jasmine is always negotiating between self-assertion and vulnerability. Her body is not passively performed, but is utilized as the instrument of her proclamation of autonomy, as in opposing violence, creating new relationships or by moving rather than staying in one place.

Her experience is representative of the larger plight of migrant females whose bodies are prodded at the borders, utilized in the labour market, and limited by male-imposed views even in contemporary societies.

6. Hybridity a Mode of Living under Modernity.

Jasmine is an engaging, dynamic movement of hybridity as opposed to the blending of cultures. Mukherjee captures the hybridity as a means of survival in the globalised world where the identities are not fixed due to movement and cultural collision.

Jasmine's hybridity is:

- Dynamic: every new environment changes her self image;
- Strategic: she gets used to live, fit in and prosper;

reliant on intimate relations, friendships, and communal values and expectations;

- Emotional: based on longing, fear, desire, nostalgia and hope.

Hybridity enables Jasmine to cross the class lines, tribal disparities and reform cultural significance. She represents what other theorists refer to as modernity at the bottom-up positions, that is, a modernity that is not defined by the elite influence but rather by the imaginative power of those who are marginalized.

Her sense of self is a constant re-writing, one being in reaction to emerging emotional and social situations and geographical locations. Migration has not only become movement across space, but it also becomes movement across selves.



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Conclusion

This paper will argue that Bharati Mukherjee in *Jasmine* is redefining the concept of identity using the theoretical framework of hybrid modernity. The protagonist does not follow a linear path to assimilation; rather, a number of metamorphoses controlled by mobility, trauma, and changing spatial situations engulf her. Due to the use of an interdisciplinary approach based on transnational feminism, modernity and globalization theory, and feminist geography the study proves that her identity is not the outcome of the cultural continuity but a result of the constant negotiations.

Jasmine is the ideal embodiment of the fluid subject position of global modernity, who is both vulnerant and powerful, belonging to several localities but belonging nowhere. Mukherjee presents the contemporary migratory woman as the one that forms her identity in reaction to the changing landscapes of globalization. The novel therefore dispels fixed understandings of belonging and introduces a discussion which places identity as being dynamic, multifaceted and heavily intertwined with global flows.

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