

## **Cultural Assimilation in Bharati Mukherjee's Novel Jasmine**

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### **Abstract**

*Culture considers as a social inheritance of human being which creates community and communication in the civilization. It contains different thoughts and possessions which states as tradition. A mode of life style connected to other fellows of the similar group belong to a particular tradition, region and culture. Each human society comprises their own series of culture and intellectual structure. Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian writer who writes in English and well known as American writer. She is a feministic writer who raises voice and give new trend to the women's literature. Though it is very difficult to categorize her fictional work, but her preference is upon the ideas related to search of identity, multiculturalism, post-colonialism and globalization. This paper aims to examine the cultural assimilation between East and western culture with references to Mukherjee's Jasmine within the basis of multicultural and globalization.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural assimilation, Globalization, Identity, Adaptability, Multiculturalism*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural influences greatly on an individual in inter personal relationship among human. Every culture holds their own systems of meanings that gradually develop through different customs, ideals, attitudes, thoughts, rituals, conviction and theories. The structure of culture easily understands by diaspora writings. Cultural diaspora writing comprises connective landscapes, cultural analysis and sign of different expatriate experiences of dislocation from their homeland and also represents the sensible physical issues between the dislocated people and an interlude deals with the marginalized through a new attitude of settlement. Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 in Calcutta, India. Bharti Mukherjee is a strong voice of Indian diaspora in America. She celebrates a different diaspora identity in her writings and tends to focus on cross cultural issues. She illustrates fluidity of cultural boundaries, Placing hybridization, migration Ethnicity and globalization at the best of her literary agenda.

### **CULTURAL FUSION**

Culture helps the individual to fulfill their potential as a human being. It provides rules of proper conduct to exist in a society. Culture is transmitted from one generation to another generation during the process of socialization and disseminated among members of society. Culture can be observed in the various aspects of psychological and social functioning that are shared among a group of people.

Culture is a fluid construct that can undergo reconstruction over a period of time. It follows; the processes of change in these aspects of functioning can be represented by the constructs of acculturation and enculturation.

Cultural assimilation is the social process of an individual. Cultural modification of an individual by adapting or copying mannerisms from another culture. It occurs when two or more cultures meet together and there is a possibility for cultural interchange and also exchanges in beliefs, customs, traditions, clothing styles, food types etc. This change could be visible and affected to both cultures. When the cultural assimilation happens in individual only for material aspects but also an enormous psychological change also happened. The immigrants drives through the cultural assimilation process in order to adapt with a new place. Cultural assimilation stands an inevitable and common. Assimilation happens when an individual absorbs the culture of the dominant group while refused the native culture.

## VOYAGE OF JASMINE

*Jasmine* is a novel of immigration and assimilation, both on physical and psychological ways. Bharati Mukherjee adapts the process of Americanization by tracing a young Indian woman's experiences of distress who tries to make an own new identity for herself. Mukherjee examines the themes of self-identity and assimilation. Jasmine constantly transforms her name based on her different situations. The immigrant forces to act according to the rules of their new homeland.

In the novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee explores the deviations, conversion, flawless identity, adaptability, and assimilation as a strategic to existence for immigrants. Jasmine migrates to the States after the death of her husband Prakash Vihj, then rescued by Lillian Gordon, her choice to escape to Iowa, her life with Bud and their adopted son Du, and finally her decision to go away with Taylor and Duff in search of a new life display the immigrant attitude of Jasmine. Jasmine expresses about cultural fusion between two or more cultures which gives way for assimilation. The state of immigrant, a sense of loss, the agony of separation, and bewilderment makes Jasmine as a protagonist of the novel who endures numerous conversions during her journey of life in America. Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane, and often encounters an extreme sense of isolation result in a fluid identity. This journey becomes a story of fearless life, a search for self-identity and self-assertion. Jyoti gives a valiant effort to bring herself into the new and outsider society as an immigrant displaced from her native land India.

Jasmine transforms herself continuously, transmitting between multiple identities in different places and at different times which brings the sense of instability into the novel. She goes against the background of the firm and patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers who states female as follows, "village girls are cattle; whichever way you lead them that are the way they will go" (JM46). Jyoti pursues a modern and educated husband who retains no conviction in dowries and traditions. Thus she discovers Prakash who believes in modernity. Prakash motivates Jyoti to learn English. He changes Jyoti into Jasmine – the wonderful fragrance flower through his modern thoughts. It gives her release from the awful stench of Hasnapur. The new name provides makeover of her new identity. Jasmine feels endless pleasure of life with Prakash. He completely changes Jyoti: "He wanted to break down the Jyoti I'd been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said, "You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You will quicken the whole world with your perfume." (JM77)

Transformation twitches from a village girl who lives under the shelter of her father and brothers. Prakash who gives her all liberties as a wife of an American traditional husband. They dreams about their life in America. But unfortunately Prakash becomes victim of Khalsa Movement and kills by Khalistan Lions. Jasmine leaves alone suddenly and becomes out of the world. She never drops her spirit at any moment. "My husband was obsessed with passing exams, doing better, making something more of his life than fate intended.... If you could first get away from India, then all fates would be canceled.... We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of God's sight (JM85).She wants to find out the Institute where her husband desires to get admission and do perform 'sati' on the campus of the Institute. Jasmine's happiness comes to an end shortly. She remains as widow and she needs to choose between the firm traditions of her family and perform Sati, or continue to live the life of Jasmine in America.

Jasmine swings between the spell of two worlds, one of "native land" and the other as an "immigrant". She goes to America on fake passes without any concerns. But she becomes conscious on the destiny of her longings and thus begins her symbolic journey of transformations, displacement, and a search for identity. She reflects: "We are the outcastes and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners of waiting rooms where surly, barely wakened customs guards await their bribe." (JM101)

Jasmine experiences her next transformation from a loyal traditional Indian wife, Jasmine to Jase when she happens to meet Taylor and then transfers on to become Bud's Jane. The author portrays this transformation and conversion as a progressive and an enthusiastic journey. Jasmine makes a new world which comprises new thoughts, ethics, and constantly exposes her past to create a new cultural identity by instructing the new longings, abilities, and lifestyles. This transition of culture is defined in the changes in her attitude, but also a relationship with men.

Jasmine manages the morals and culture of two disparate worlds and her event with various characters of Jyoti and Jasmine, where Jasmine feels float between the traditional and modern world. Jasmine at that point meets Lillian Gordon, residual with whom starts her cycle of assimilation by acquired how to get American. Lillian Gordon calls her as Jazzy and trains her to dress, walk and talk like American. She tries to adjust herself to the new situation. So she senses at times "like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to show myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on. Down and I go, where I'll stop, God only knows" (JM113-39). The transformation of another life starts again. She attempts to separate herself from all her Indian identity and overlook her past completely.

The novel *Jasmine* treaties with the theme of immigration and conversion. It displays compatibility of an Americanized cultural identity. Jasmine stands as rebellious, a survivor, a warrior and adapter against the words of astrologer. Her journey of life drives her through numerous changes – Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, and Jane through various topographical regions like Hasnapur, Jullundhar, Florida, New York, Iowa lastly California. The transformation and assimilation in the foreign culture never remains easy as Jasmine says, "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams" (JM29). Mukherjee does not give the internal perception of the protagonists and undertakes the profound battle that Americans undergo in identify with one another. The novel displays American life from an immigrant point of view about their departure away by permitted and prohibited entry into their nation and its results.

In the novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee extends and acknowledges the resolution and courage of a village girl who comes from a diffident, uncertain circumstances turns into a tough and liberated Americanized woman. Mukherjee herself experiences the liveliness of immigrant life. The immigrant forces to assimilate into the dominated culture. Jasmine goes through the practice of transformation into Jazzy-Jane in order to get assimilated into the new culture. Jasmine recognizes herself through her transformation and assimilation into the American culture. Jasmine never ignore Indian values and culture, but rebels the customs and convention of the Indian society which subjugates women. She also disgests the moral exploitation of America. Thus, the definitions of cultural assimilation gets explored in the life of immigrant as an Asian-American. Through this novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee creates group variability among immigrant families in terms of cultural assimilation. They engages to adapt to the customs of the dominant US culture when they tries to retain the norms of their native ethnic culture.

## CONCLUSION

Bharati Mukherjee as a diaspora writer stands apart emphasized the struggle for survival and cultural assimilation rather than longs for homeland and sense of dislocation and rootlessness. She is fully conscious of the challenges and problems of exile involves but she considers that in a multicultural global world, cultural assimilation is not only desired but convinced. It is clear that, her theme of immigrant involves the journey from one world to another world, displacement and adaptability with a new form of culture and arrangement of a new global society. In a globalized world, receptive acknowledgment of another culture, their way of life, their lifestyle is the need of great importance. There is no doubt of losing one's ethnic character yet making another personality that clears path for

genuine democratic lifestyle, multiculturalism and resistance towards others' religion, political philosophy and lifestyle. In this regard, Bharati Mukherjee's novel like *Jasmine* do envision new worldwide and multicultural universe of contemporary life.

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