Journal of Literary Aesthetics
Volume-1, Issue-2, Year-2014
PP: 47-56 ISSN No: 2347-8705

Layers of Cross Cultural Reality in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

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Beginning with an expatriate's uprooted identity in the early 1970's, Bharati Mukherjee's creative faculty explored he transitional dilemma of characters in early 80's, whose acculturation bids were occasionally thwarted by the complexity of cultural plurality in the adopted land. However, after the publication the *The Middleman* (1988), the process of cultural acclimatisation appears to be complete and the characters betray the confidence of an immigrant, almost a naturalized citizen, in facing the challenges of human life.

In *Jasmine*(1989), Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross-cultural reality through a series of adventures which the heroine undertakes during her odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and lowa. Her struggle symbolises the restless quest of a rootless person piqued by a depressing sense of isolation all around. The story opens with the village astrologer under his banyan tree foretelling Jasmine's 'widowhood and exile.' It all turns out just as nastily as he says it will, but at the same time Jasmine is a survivor, a fighter and adapter. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations — Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane via divergent geographical locales like Punjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and finally California. At every step Jasmine revolts against her fate and the path drawn for her. The narrative shuttles between past and present, between India of the narrator 's early life and America of her present one. The past is Jyoti's childhood in the small village of Hasnapur, Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vijh and the consequences leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in Baden, Iowa where she is live-in-companion to Bud Ripplemeyer, a small town banker.

Jasmine's transformation from Jyoti to Jane had its own scars and stresses. Jyoti is born in a feudal village of Punjab, eighteen years after the partition riots. The fifth daughter and seventh of nine children of her parents, she is a dowryless, undesirable female child, a curse for them. However, she is bold and intelligent, the first ever likely student of Masterji fit for English education. She is a non-conformist, a rebel who questions the prophecies of the astrologer about her "widowhood and exile" in the harshest terms: "You're a cracy old man. You don't know what my future holds!"[1] This irritates the fortune-teller and he chucks hard on her head and she falls on the ground getting a star-shaped scar on her forehad. This scar is seen as a curse to her but she treats it as her "third eye" and feels like becoming "sage."(p.5) She does not believe in the prevalent conviction that "Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go."(p.46) To exhibit the force of her belief she refuses to marry the widower selected by her grandmother and eventually ends up marrying Prakash Vijh in a court of law. The cursed and hapless village girl in Jyoti becomes Jasmine, a city woman, wife of a modern man Prakash who wishes her "to call him by his first name."(p.77) This christening means much to her. "He gave me a

new name: Jasmine. He said: "You are small and sweet and heady,my Jasmine. You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume." (p.77)

After marriage she becomes a true wife in the Indian sense of the term identifying her husband's wishes with those of hers. Prakash's ardent wish is to secure admission in some obscure American Institute of technology. They start dreaming about their life in America but as the ill-luck would have it, Prakash falls a prey to the Khalsa Lions, the rebels demanding a separate land of Khalistan for Sikhs, on the very eve of his departure rendering Jasmine heart-broken and alone. A born fighter as she is, she does not allow this heart-rendering tragedy to deter her courage. She plans to visit the supposed institute where Prakash had to get admitted and to burn herself a "Sati" on the campus of that engineering school. Jasmine's decision leaves her family aghast and they wonder "a village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers?"(p.97) Jasmine leaves for America on forged papers knowing not what future holds in store for her. But she is aware of the fate of her likes. She muses:

We are the outcastes and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of 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. We are dressed shreds of national costumes, out of season, the witted plumage of inter-continental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue. (p.101).

Jasmine's killing of Half-Face is a kind of self-assertion. Her dicision to kill herself first, is a decision of a woman who lives for her deceased husband but the woman who kills Half-Face is Jasmine is estranged by the uncertainties of her life in an unknown country. However, she travels to the New World on a shrimper called 'The Gulf Shuttle'. Jasmine's first encounter with America is a kind of what Malashri Lal says, a "regeneration through violence."[2] The captain of the ship, an ugly fellow, Half-Face who "had lost an eye and ear and most of his cheek in paddy field in Vietnam"(p.104) takes her to a remote motel of Florida and makes before her indecent proposals. Jasmine requests him that she is a deplorable Hindu widow and her "mission is to bring her husband's suit to America." (p.114) He laughs at her idea: "Getting your ass kicked half way around the world just to burn a suit. I never heard such a fool notion." (p.114) He remorselessly rapes Jasmine and this outrage is too much for an Indian widow. He sleeps after promising more sexual excitement later in the night. Jasmine goes to bathroom and decides to balance her defilement with her death, but before she could do so she discovers that she wants to live. Instantly she realizes: "I could not let my personal dishonour disrupt my mission." She extends her tongue and slices it, blood oozing — a perfect vengeful image of Goddess Kali out to defy and destroy the 'devil' who has violated her chastity. She kills the demon and for some moment remains perturbed:

No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered. The room looked like a slaughter house. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, my breasts...I was in a room with a slain man, my body blooded. I was walking death, Death incarnate. (p.119)

prompted by her will to live to continue her life."In killing Half-Face," writes Samir Dayal, "she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation."[3] Pondering

over the agonising as well as transforming effect of evil Jasmine says:

For the first time in my life I understood what evil was about. It was about not being human... It was a very simple, very clear perception, a moment of truth, the kind of understanding that I have heard comes at the moment of death.(p.116)

After this violent encounter with the ugly world, Jasmine starts afresh; sans money, sans idea about the surroundings — hungry and thirsty, broken both in body and mind. Incidentally she happens to meet Lillian Gordon, a kind Quaker lady who harbours her, pities like an American. She advises her: "let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you."(p.131) Lillian Gordon is committed to help the illegal immigrants. Later on she encourages Jasmine to proceed to New York for a suitable job with an introductory letter to her daughter staying there. After reaching New York Jasmine decides to visit her husband's former teacher Devinder Vadhera who has been instrumental in her husband's admission. His home in Flushing, Queens, is part of a Punjabi immigrant ghetto. Vadheras never try to come out of their four walls, the "artificially maintained Indianness."(p.145) Jasmine remembers her five months sojourn at Flushing with pain and despair: "Flushing, with all its immigrant services at hand, frightened me."(p.145) Here among the Vadheras she is a helpless widow not entitled to enjoy life. This life is terrifying to her, "I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like."(p.145) America has so many surprises for Jasmine in its "Pandora box." To her dismay she comes to know that Devinder Vadhera far from being a real Professor is a sorter of human hair. This fact unfolds, for the first time, the reality of immigrant life to her and she rationalises Vadhera's act: "He needed to work here, but he did not have to like it. He had sealed his heart when he'd left home. His real life was in an unlivable land across oceans. He was a ghost, hanging on." (p.153)

This comprehension of reality is further confirmed by the taxi-driver who is a doctor from Kabul and confides to her, "we have to be here living like dogs."(p.140) In New York streets Jasmine sees "more greed, more people"(p.140) like herself. New York seems to be "an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens."(p.140) Her failure in understanding the intentions of the American beggar is symbolic of confusion that grips an immigrant in an alien land. The American beggar abuses her and calls her a "foreign bitch." Jasmine, like the true immigrants is tossed between a desire for remembering her past and an equally pressing urgency to forget it:

I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on. Down and down I go, where I'll stop, God only knows. (p.139)

The freedom loving spirit of Jasmine finds it difficult to cope with the conservative India represented by the Vadheras and after spending five frustrating months at Flusing, one day she deserts the Vadheras and sets forth for another adventure. Next we see Jasmine in an apartment on Claremont Avenue, Manhattan with Taylor and Wylie Hayes as a care-giver to their adopted daughter, Duff. This is the best period of her stay in the States. She discovers to her excitement that Taylor is a true professor and at once feels impressed by his humane conduct: "I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her, and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking." (p.167) Taylor gives

her a new name "Jase" and she is all excited about her life with the Hayeses. She recalls: "Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family."(p.165)

In the new surroundings marked by personal warmth, Jasmine becomes more Americanized, more confident of her proficiency in English but her instinctive Indian values do surface now and then. For instance, when she comes to know that Duff is not a natural child but an adopted one, her reactions are culturally revealing: "I could not imagine a non-genetic child. A child that was not my own, or my husband's, struck me as a monstrous idea. Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage. (p.170)

Her Indian sense of values cannot tolerate the sight of "naked bodies combing their hair in front of dresser mirrors."(p.171) She records her disgust: "Truly there was no concept of shame in this society. I'd die before a Sob Sister asked me about half-face." (p.171) She again feels outwitted at Wylie's decision to leave Taylor for enconomist Stuart in search of "real happiness." (p.181) She feels defeated: "America had thrown me again. There was no word I could learn, no one I could consult, to understand, what Wylie was saying or why she had done it." (p.182) This is beyond imagination for Jasmine to think of snapping her bonds with her husband. She comes to realise the "liquidity" and "transitoriness" of human relationships in America. She gets the bitterest lesson:

In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate. (p.181)

However, she is not unmindful of the positive side of American ethos. She appreciates the Americans for their democracy of thought and their sense of respect even for those doing menial works. The Western civilization has a "Work-Culture" and in this set up everybody is discharging his duty without any complex. She compares her own situation with the Mazbi woman who worked in her house at Hasnapur:

In Hansnapur the Mazbi woman who'd stoked our hearth or spread our flaking, dried-out adobe walls with watered cow dung had been a maidservant. Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family, I was professional. (p.175)

Jasmine has experienced the best moments of stay in America in the company of Taylor and Duff who are like family for her. Taylor also starts loving her and she too wishes that her role as a "day-mummy" should never end. She is absorbed in the American world forgetting all about her strange mission as she herself accepts: "Jyoti was now a sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-cum-funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for future, for Vijh & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today."(p.176) She thinks that she has got an established home and now she will no longer be haunted by rootlessness, "I had landed and was getting rooted" (p.179) but still her destination is not reached and she is forced to run from New York. She sees the assassin of her husband, Sukhwinder, and runs for life to Iowa. But her escape is not a sign of her cowardice, it is 'life-affirming, "She (Jasmine) is running away for life not escaping from life which is a positive step."[4] Pushpa N. Parekh thinks that Jasmine's stay at Taylor's for two years is the most fruitful period of her life in America:

This period in Jasmine's life is the most restful and comforting, emotionally and

psychologically, intellectually, however, it is a phase of minute observations of complex inner deliberations on, and keen involvement in her new environment.[5]

Again her observations on Taylor-Wylie episode are very minute: Wylie's apparent "reasonless" abandoning of Taylor and Duff is a jolt back to the inexplicable and unexplainable nature of human action. Instead of fate or destiny or an unknown power being responsible for a family's break-up, Jasmine witnesses an American woman,Wylie, deliberately choosing to leave. Jasmine's inner monologues and silent reflections capture her deliberations on cultural differences and an immigrant woman's emotional adherence to her traditional beliefs while intellectually exploring the new avenues opened to her by the modern value systems.[6]

Jasmine's life in Iowa again begins with her chance meeting with Mother Ripplemayer, the Iowan counterpart of Lillian Gordon. She helps her getting a job in her son Bud's bank as a teller girl and after six months she is the live-in companion of Bud Ripplemayer. It seems that Bharati Mukherjee uses fate and chance as 'problem-solving-device.' In her use of this device there is something like a "fairytale." It not only gives her a new life but also a new name — Jane. When Jane meets Bud he is "a tall, fit, fifty-year-old banker, husband of Karin, father of Buddy and Vern"(p.14) but after six months he is a divorcee living with an illegal immigrant: "Asia had transformed him, made him reckless and emotional. He wanted to make-up for fifty years of "selfishness", as he calls it." (p.14) After one year he is a crippled man living with his Asian wife and adopted son, Du who is a Vietnamese brought from a refugee camp by him. Nobody is safe in violence torn America. Bud falls a victim to one Harlan Kroener who shoots him leaving maimed. Jane likes Iowa because it is very much like Hasnapur. The farmers here are very much like the farmers of her own village "modest people, never boastful, tactful and courtly in their way." (p.11) Bud is always uneasy with her past and never enquires of it. To quote Jane: "My genuine foreignness frightens him. I don't hold that against him. It frightens me too(p." (p.26) It is her strangeness that adds to her beauty: "Bud courts me because I am alien. I am darkness,mystery, inscrutability.The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom. I rejuvenate him simply by being who I am." (p.200).

Jasmine's every movement is a calculated step into her Americanization and with each development a vital change is marked in her personality. Jasmine's flight to Iowa and her renaming as Jane is indicative of a slow but steady immersion into mainstream American culture. Here we encounter a changed Jasmine — one who had murdered Half-Face for violating her chastity, now not only willingly embraces the company of an American without marriage but also is carrying his child in her womb. We are simply surprised at ther act since every idea revolts at this form of an Indian widow. But one should never forget that she is a rebel who revolts at every step against the path drawn for her. She is an adapter, a survivor. Du is also a fighter who has survived eating worms and rodents in the refugee camp. Jasmine easily identifies herself with Du because both have made odysseous exploits in order to live. They "communicate silently in a no-questions asked relationship of strong identification: they come from the same "Third World" and share a common legacy of suffering and survival."[7] An immigrant's life is in fact a series of reincarnations. He lives through several lives in a single life-time. This truth explains the condition of Bharati Mukherjee as well as that of Jasmine. As Mukherjee confides in one of her

interviews: I have been murdered and reborn at least three times, the very correct young woman I was trained to be, and was very happy being, is very different from the politicized, shrill, civil rights activist I was in Canada, and from the urgent writer that I have become in the last few years in the United States.[8]

This statement has marked similarity with Jasmine's outcry: There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves — in the images of dreams. (p.29).

Muherjee, by subjecting her heroine to multiple codes of society and geographical locales seems to send the message that if one has to assimilate oneself to the mainstream culture of the adopted land, one should forget one's past. This notion finds ample support from Jasmine's statement: "Once we start letting go — let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehaead—the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole." (p.29) But this assimilation of Jasmine is not so smooth as it might appear on the surface: Fear, anger, pain, bitterness, confusion, silence, irony, humor, as well as pathos—underline her observations as she discovers for herself the undefined median between the preservation of the old world and the assimilation into the new one.[9]

All is well with Jane in Iowa till Du leaves for Los Angles to join his siter. She has started identifying herself with Du because he is an immigrant like herself. Both are in a great hurry to become American, to forget the nightmares of their early lives. But Du's sudden departure shatters her world she has been so delicately nursing. Her passionate cry bursts out: "How dare he leave me alone out here. How dare he retreat with my admiration, my pride, my total involvement in everything he did. His education was my education." (p.223) Jasmine knows that "blood is thick" but the very "prospect of losing him (Du) is like a miscarriage." (p.22) He has been a silent companion of Jasmine/Jane in all her bright and gloomy moments. Jasmine tries "to think like Lillian Gordon" at the moment who had put her on the bus without shoing any kind of grief, she orders herself "Don't cry, don't feel sorry for yourself" (p.224) but this does not prove helpful. This sense of bereavement acquires intensity by the suicide of neighbouring Lutz boy Darrel who has been in love with her though she never responds to his love. The accumulated effect of these incidents and at this moment a call from Jasmine's former lover Taylor sets the path ready for her last adventure. Though "Bud's face, gray, ghostly, bodyless, floats in narrowing circles" (p.239) around her, she does not care for this man "who is losing his world." (239) Already she has stopped thinking about Bud and at this moment Taylor and Duff come to take her to California where the new world, the promise of America is eagerly awaiting her. In deserting Bud and choosing Taylor, Jasmine does not exchange between men but she changes her whole world. As she herself confides, "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness."(p.240)

All through her stay for more than three years in Iowa, Jasmine has been faithful to Bud. She has acted like an Indian wife who exults in her loyalty towards her husband. She has identified all her dreams and wishes with Bud's. She has sacrified all her individuality at the holy shrine of matrimony. She thinks that even the memory of the past life amounts to a kind of disloyality to Bud because he feels frightened by her stories of Hansnapur. At Iowa she is perfect wife who tries to please her husband by all means. She plays the temptress at his behest and hangs up all decency to yield to the sexual passion of a crippled person. Here she is very much like

Indian women, bound to the "old world dutifulness" but the woman who walks out at last with Taylor "greedy with wants and reckless from hope,"(p.241) is positively an entirely different woman. This is a woman who is ready to see ahead, to ingratiate the best that future holds in store for her. She has no moral scruples and never feels guilty of her decision: It is not guilt that I feel, its relief... Adventure risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows." (p. 240) She challenges the mocking astrologer who had declared her star-crossed, "Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stove." (p.240)

T. Padma sees jasmine's linking with Taylor "as a validation of her avowed belief — treat every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God."[10] Her belief is a reaffirmation of the courage she mustered in killing the mad dog saying, "I was not ready to die" (p.56). From Jyoti to Jasmine, Kali to Jazzy and Jase to Jane is a long and arduous journey "hurtled through time tunnels" (p.240), surviving the worst in life. From the special and unique nature of her evolving "Jasmine" self, Jane becomes, as her name implies, a non-entity, even a conscienceless "gold digger" in Karin's words. (p.195) From the "Sati-goddess" Jyoti (p.176) to the Kali-Jasmine to "adventurous Jase" (p.186) to "Plain Jane" (p.26) has been an eventful, uneven odyssey; the protagonist's name changes as well as her shifts in places of residence becomes metaphors for an immigrant woman's 'process of uprooting and re-rooting.'

Jane is expected to eventually become Bud Ripplemeyer's wife and the mother of their expected child. She, however, is a complex blend of the "silent woman," "the speaking person" and the "teller of tales." As the "silent woman" she accepts the almost pre-planned and tailor-made itinerary of a certain predictable way of life with Bud. But her increasing sense of isolation and loss of self in this suffocating world is heightened by her inability to share with him her memories or reflections of the past, which are as much as a part of her identity as the present. Bud prefers not to discuss her painful past. This is in sharp contrast to Taylor's disposition —"Tayolor didn't want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreigners. My being different from Wylie or Kate didn't scare him." (p.185) Ready to sacrifice her own happiness and dreams, Jane almost acquiesces to become Bud's Wife. It is through Du, their adopted Vietnamese son, that she wishes to sustain her identity as an "immigrant." All the forces in Iowa would eventually freeze her to conformity ro continual alienation. Bud is uncomfortable with her tales of Hasnapur. He wishes her to keep silent while Du, driven to quickly becomes thoroughly Amereican, only cursorily pays heed to her stories about her Indian life. She realizes that she cannot remake herself through Du. "My transformation has been genetic; Du's was hyphenated." (p.222) In evaluating her past and present and envisaging her future, she confronts the complexity and multiplicity of her identity as an immigrant woman. Appearing self-possessed and patient, Jane, as we discover her through her interior monologues, is seething. Likening herself to a "tornado," she wonders over the changes that are yet to re-shape her destiny: I still think of myself as care-giver, recipe giver, preserver. I can honestly say all I wanted was to serve, be allowed to join, but I have created confusion and destruction wherever I go. As Karin says, I am a tornado. I hit the trailer parks first, the prefabs, the weakest tlinks. How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husband?(p.215)

In telling her tale, the Jane and Jasmine selves of the protagonist seeks to blend her 'wants' and 'dreams' into possibilities and realities. The range and the texture of the narrative voice reiterate the immigrant wonan's personal journey as a new questing pioneer's movement from self-denial to self-realization. Jasmine's restless move from one place to another betrays her gripping alienation and bewilderment. On more than one occasions she realizes that she is an "outsider" and "other" in America — an illegal immigrant without passport, living among aliens whose ways she knows nothing about. She is always apprehensive about American being and thinking, suffers humiliation and disappointment. As she mutters: "This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing." (p.29) Again her failure to understand Wylie's decision to leave Taylor testifies to the fact that she is a poor immigrant. She comes from the third world where experiences are always painful and it is in sharp contrast to her experience of America. As she says; "For them, experience leads to Knowledge, or else it is wasted. For me (or likes), experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill." (p.33) She dresses like an American, puts on an American name but she can trust only Asians: "I trust only Asian doctors, Asian professionals. What we've gone through must count for something."(p.32) She is loved by all for her Indianness which has made her a lovable and caring wife, an affectionate mother. She echoes her sentiment again and again: A good Hasnapur wife doesn't eat just because she is hungry. Food is a way of granting or withholding love. …….I'll wait supper for you. Indian wives never eat before their husbands. (p.213)

The above statements show that even if she is living with an American in an American household, among American appliances, her ideal is an Indian wife who is by nature self-sacrificing. Jane does not pay heed to Bud's entreaty to marry her because she thinks she is responsible "for Prakash's death, Bud's maiming and is a tornado, blowing through Baden." (p.206) Jasmine never forgets her past which impinges upon her senses like the stench of the carcass of the dog she encounters early in her life. "She perpetually haunts, and is haunted by, her ghostly identities ... She shuttles between differing identities."[11] Indeed, Jasmine is a rebel and revolutionary. She protests against rigours of Indian culture. Her protest, like that of Bharati Mukherjee herself, is not against Indian culture per se but against its relentiveness, its particular way of partially comprehending the world. She revolts against conservative Indian attitude towards poor widows who are treated like non-entites. She resents against the 'Sati' system which compels Indian women to sacrifice their life although they want to live. She rebukes the male cominating Indian society which discourages self-reliance in women. Her grudge is against the artificially maintained ghetto which bars the non-resident Indians from identifying themselves with the progressive ideals of the West. However, her native values determine substantially the quality of her life.

Bharati Mukherjee does not consider Jasmine "a good person," she is a "black-mailer" and a "murderer" who has dumped a good crippled man. But she considers her a "love goddess" a "life-force."[12] She is not moral in the conventional sense but her morality is her own way of looking at life. She is a 'path-finder' and pierces her way through the dense jungle of problems. Every movement adds to her self-confidence and her experience guides her future course of action. She is fluid, adjusting and justifies her each and every role. Mukherjee's following observations border on confessional

note: The kinds of women I write about ... are those who are adaptable. We've all been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives, and that adaptability is working to the women's advantage when we come over as immigrants.[13]

Outwardly Jasmine responds very promptly to the behavioural patterns of the American society and instantly inculcates it in her character. However, a tenacious Indianness seems to cling to the sub-surface of her adaptations. Indira Bhatt pertinently comments, "Jasmine takes a bird-view of the American life and does not touch the deeper layers of values there."[14]

Had she been purely guided by the American values, she should have abandoned Bud at the time of his disability. She abandons Bud later on, no doubt, but this decision is a cumulative effect of the happenings — Du's departure, Darrel's suicide and Taylor's proposal: Even Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase and Jane may appear to be real transformation of the personality of the protagonist; from Hasnapur to Jullundhar to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa may appear to be moving from old world values to the brave new world. But the person we see at the end of the novel moving away with Taylor, is very much the same person we encounter at the earlier stages in the novel.[15]

In Jasmine's tug of war between 'old world dutifulness' and the 'progressive America, a perceptive reader can unmistakably mark that the ongoing conflict hardly reaches a happy reconciliation. Ingenious attempts have been made by some scholars to trace autobiographical touches in Mukherjee's works and this is obviously a commonplace criticism on expatriatewriters. Identifying Jasmine's predicament with that of her creator, Malashri Lal observes, "A passport gives instant legal recognition, it does not determine instant cultural transfers. That truth explains Bharati Mukherjee's dilemma as also her Jasmine's restless moves."[17] In attempting to resolve her crisis of identity through nomenclature —from Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase and to Jane — coupled with changes in geographical contours — from Hasnanur to Jullundhar, to Florida, Manhattan, Iowa—Jasmine tries all external alternatives but to no avail. The person one sees at the end of the novel same one encounters at the earlier stages in the novel.

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15. *Ibid*., p.177.
16. Sarah Curtis. "All-American Indian," *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 April 1990, 436.
17. Malashri Lal. "Bharati Mukherjee: The 'Maximalist Credo" in K.N. Awasthi, ed. *Contemporary Indian English Fiction: An Anthology of Essays*, op. cit.,p.63.