

REINVENTING THE SELF IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE*

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ABSTRACT

Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine is a story of a young Punjabi woman named Jasmine whose life takes her from India to the United States, where she goes through many different destinies with her effort to reinvent her coherent self. Searching for and defining a new identity is a central question for immigrants living in a foreign land. The confusion of identity and cultural conflict pushes the immigrants into an identity crisis. The novel exposes how Jasmine, the female protagonist, as an outsider, strives to shape her identity to fit in the mainstream American society. Fortunately, she encounters confirmations of her shifting identity in different stages of her life. Instead of rejecting these identities and names in various phases, she seeks to create a harmonious relationship with those identities. In this context, this paper tries to explore on how she struggles throughout her life to reinvent the coherent self by her constant effort to assimilate to the alien culture and setting.

KEYWORDS: Identity crisis; alienation; diaspora; adoption and assimilation

INTRODUCTION

An Indian-born American novelist and short-story writer Bharati Mukherjee's works reflect Indian culture and immigrant's experiences. Unlike many other immigrant writers, "Mukherjee identifies herself as an unhyphenated American rather than calling herself a hyphenated Indian- American writer Her writing describes the old world but also new perspectives along with the changes upon assimilation into the new society" (Tai, 2016, p. 65). She often writes about the problem of cross-cultural conflict experienced by Indian immigrant women.

Mukherjee is a post-colonial immigrant who immigrated to Canada and later became an American of Indian origin. Her novels often deal with the problems and issues related with the South Asian women, particularly Indians. As Babu & Kumar (2013) indicate, her "female protagonists are immigrants and suffer cultural shock but they are potential women and are anxious to establish their identity by undertaking their heroic journeys" (p. 40). *Jasmine*, a popular novel of Mukherjee, tries to highlight an Indian woman immigrant's hardship to make her identity in the United State. In other words, it is the investigation on immigrant's identity. Jasmine, the title character in the novel, constantly shifts from one identity to another and finally sets herself into an alien country as Tai (2016) argues, "Jasmine exemplifies all immigrant women who have taken their destiny at home" (p. 66). From the fluid and fragmented identity, Jasmine tries to establish the coherent identity defying the fate. The novel not only involves the struggle against the ordinary

difficulties of the normal process which is experienced by every young person, but also challenges the problem related to sexual, racial, national and cultural identity. Jasmine's life in India, her migration to United States and her struggle to define herself portray the similar stories of many others both as easterners and women (Erten, 2013). Jasmine, so, undergoes the cultural conflict and the identity crisis that finds some ways with the self-assertion.

DIASPORIC VOICE IN MUKHERJEE

The term "Diaspora" refers to the dispersion of religious or ethnic groups from their established homeland either forced or voluntary. Diaspora literature is the work by authors who live outside their homeland. It addresses issues such as identity, culture, hybridity, nationality, home, homelessness and binary categories like self/other, insider/outsider and margin/center. As a writer of Diaspora, "Mukherjee's novels and short stories express the nomadic impulses of Indians, who in their deliberate search for materially better life migrate to the west and consequently face tensions of adaptations and assimilation" (Umadevi, 2012, p. 607). Her writings are shaped by her Diasporic identity, immigrant experiences, and her personal experience as a woman.

Diasporic literature, especially Indian literature, is the result of colonization and decolonization, the period in Indian history in which a number of Indian people were migrated to other countries either due to colonizers or by their need for work. These migrated people began to face different problems as they were indifferent to the new culture which led them to search for their identity. This feeling of lack of identity gets classical expression in the diasporic literature of the period. Many writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and Arvind Adiga have expressed the feeling of rootlessness in the migrated countries where they are treated as 'Other'. Mukherjee also expresses the sense of loss of identity in her novels.

Mukherjee is one of the most celebrated writers of the Asian immigrant experience in America. As a writer of diaspora, her fictions are centric to the question of nostalgia for a lost home, disillusionment of expatriation, fragmentation of the self, exuberance of immigration, assimilation, cultural translation and negotiation. As Ravichandra and Deivasigamani (2013) find, her writings are largely honed by the multiple dislocations of her personal life, which itself has been described as a text in a kind of perennial immigration. They examine how post-colonialism affects identity formation in contemporary women's immigrant literature. Immigrant literature is increasingly interested in the transnational experiences of its protagonists, and is not simply about migrating to and making it in America, but engages with the literal and metaphorical crossing and re-crossing of borders. Her protagonists, going beyond the normal conception of diaspora, struggle for identity rather than just having the sense of alienation and displacement.

JOURNEY FOR THE COHERENT SELF

Mukherjee's Jasmine is basically a story of transformation from the fragmentation to the coherence self. Jasmine, an Indian peasant woman, takes her journey from the village Hasnapur, Punjab, to Florida, to New York, and then to Iowa and as the novel ends, she is about to set off to California. As Mythili (2013) observes, "Jasmine metamorphoses herself constantly during this journey, which starts from Jyoti the village girl in Hasnapur, to Jasmine, the city woman, to Jazzy, the undocumented immigrant, to Jase, the Manhattan Nanny, to Jane, the Iowan woman who enters the story" (p. 527). Mythili continues

her comment in this way, “it is a story of dislocation and relocation, as the protagonist continually sheds her existing role to move into other roles” (p. 527). Jasmine in the novel makes assimilation with different circumstances. Jasmine, an underage village girl from the Panjab, ventures as an undocumented widow to the United States “where her fate will be rewritten” (Ponzanesi, 2004, p. 36). She travels to America to achieve something significant in her life.

Mukherjee’s novels present the theme of alienation, and an exploration of the place inhabited by outsiders, by those who are considered ‘Other’ - notably (Indian) immigrants or expatriates. More specifically, she depicts all her outsiders as female, in a deliberate effort to focus on the particular condition of female alienation in contemporary society. Her protagonists in her novels are presented as highly sensitive women with certain capacity to question accepted social codes. As Anju Bala Agrawal (2011) in her article “From Quotidian Existence to a Distinct Stature: A Study of Women in the Writings of Contemporary Indian English Writing” finds her women characters:

... refuse to be ideal *pativrata*, or the passive docile self-effacing women and the angel in the house who occupies a secondary position in society from the limited sphere of traditionally ordained roles of daughters, wife or mothers, they strive for an identity of their own. In this struggle for identity, they are victimized by alienation. She focuses in her novels on the particular on the male/female dichotomy and the continuing colonization of female identity in contemporary patriarchal societies. (n.p.)

Inferior and alienated though, the women characters try to be more assertive. They seem to deconstruct the prevailing female stereotypes that women are the submissive beings considered to be inferior to men.

The novel begins with these lines, “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 widowhood and exile”(Mukherjee, 1989, p. 3). Jasmine was only seven then. She rejects the astrologer’s forecast when she declares, “You crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds” (p. 3). As Ponzanesi (2004) asserts, she reacts to the “astrologer’s attempt to reduce her to nothingness by falling down and making a star shaped mark on her forehead” (p. 37) which she interprets as her “third eye” (p. 5) through which she can look at the invisible world as the sages do. In fact, this incident gave her wider perspectives in her life. She goes through the “war between [her] fate and [her] will” (p. 12) by challenging the established discipline of astrology.

Her identity at the beginning was confined with the patriarchal gender norms that she tries to overcome throughout her journey in the novel. She says, “If I had been a boy, my birth in a bountiful year would have marked me as lucky, a child with a special destiny to fulfill. But daughters were curses.... and dowries beggared families for generations” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 39). The first obstacle women have to overcome is the dowry necessary for a marriage. Dowry determines the fate of a woman. Jasmine says, “all over our district, bad luck dogged dowryless wives, rebellious wives, and barren wives... fell into wells, they got run over by trains, they burned to death heating milk on kerosene stoves” (p. 41), indicating how women were taken as the deteriorate bodies in terms of traditional gender dynamics. As Ponzanesi (2004) indicates, “this discourse constructs the third world as a monolithically oppressive society where resistance and rebellion is impossible” (p. 43). Jasmine, in the novel, however, tries to overcome the oppression.

Jasmine was the unwanted fifth daughter of the family. Unable to provide for her five

daughters dowries, Jasmine's mother complained, "God's cruel...to waste brains on a girl" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 40). Human psyche itself is colonized by the misogynistic culture. She wanted a happy life for her daughter, but it was the patriarchy and the culture that were always hindrance for the existence of women as men. When strongly deterministic, Jyoti reveals her aspiration to be a doctor, "I want to be a doctor" (p. 5) and set up a clinic, her father devaluates her ambition and proclaims her as being a mad. Furthermore, Dida, Jasmine's grandmother, says, "Blame the mother. Insanity has to come from somewhere. It's the mother who is mad" (p. 51). It is not the father but the mother is to be blamed for the cause of their children.

Though Jasmine's early life is dominated by patriarchal values, she never falls back to show her fighting spirit whether in her early life in India or during her exile. She survives "innumerable beginnings and ends" (Ponzanesi, 2004, p. 39). Each time, she has to present herself with a new lifestyle and new challenge that she has to conquer. She has "hurled through time tunnels" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 240). Ponzanesi continues to argue that she "steps from the old world ethics of submission, helplessness and doom to the exciting new ethics of adventure, risk and transformation" (p.40) with the desire to get harmony in her life not in traditional but through a quite innovative way.

At fourteen, Jasmine marries Prakash Vjih, one of her brother's friends, with whose voice she falls in love at the beginning. Unlike other male characters in the novel, Prakash was a modern man who believed, "there's no room in modern India for feudalism" and "only in feudal societies is the woman still a vessel" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 77). He wanted Jyoti call him by his name instead of the pronoun women in the village use to address their husbands, and she obediently followed him though it was difficult for her at the beginning. He wanted to break down Jyoti she had been in Hasnapur and make her a new kind of city woman as she says, "To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine" (p. 77). Now, she finds herself shuttled between identities: Jyoti and Jasmine. As her identity is confused, she is trapped within the tradition and modernity. Prakash argued, "We aren't going to spawn! We aren't ignorant peasant! [when she] wanted to get pregnant" (p. 77). It was the period of tension in Punjab in the 1980's, when Sikh terrorists roamed the Panjab on scoters planting bombs. Prakash who was preparing to go to study in America, fell victim to a Sikh terrorist's bomb. With Prakash dead, Jasmine wants only to burn herself alive, like a good Hindu wife of old tradition, on the Florida Campus where he wanted to reach.

Determined to fight her destiny, Jyoti begins to empower herself through learning English, for whom "to want English was to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 68). She desires to learn English, for it is an elitist impetus which will have transformative effect on her life. When she meets Prakash, her would-be husband, her prime concern is his fluency in English. She herself sat with old copies of newspapers and practiced English phrases.

Jasmine's journey through life leads her through many transformation—Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane via divergent geographical locales like Panjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and finally California. These different phases of her self-development are shaped by external conditions as well as internal transformation. At every step, she 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 Hansapur, Punjab, her marriage to Prakash Vjih and consequences leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in

Baden, Iowa where she is a “live-in- companion to Bud Ripplemeyer” (Kumar, 2001, p. 107-8), a small town banker.

Jasmine’s transformation from one identity to another is often a complex process that is not solely dependent upon the agency of an individual but also the surrounding environment. When Prakash marries her, he wants her to become a modern city woman and as he aids her in her transformation from ‘Jyoti’ to ‘Jasmine’ she both perceives herself as, and eventually becomes the figure that Prakash desires to create. Her renaming is a sign of her initial migration away from traditional India.

When Sikh terrorists murder Prakash, Jasmine immigrates to America all alone to fulfill her husband’s mission and wants to perform ‘*sati*’ by cremating herself on the pyre of his suit. Upon her arrival to the shore of Florida with forged travel documents, she meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and his disrespectful treatment gives her, the first taste of American racial categorization. Half-Face sees her only as a sexual being and rapes her. After the rape, she finds that she cannot escape this new perception of her identity.

She is not only raped by the man called Half-Face but also humiliated by him:

He looked at me, and at the suitcase...He hefted the bag onto the bed and un-snapped the catches. Out came my sandalwood Ganpati. He propped it up against a picture on the dresser. He noticed my photo album and picked it up. Pictures of Prakash and of Pitaji, wrapped in an old sari...At the bottom, the blue suit.

“Who’s this for?” he demanded. “A kid?”

“It is my husband’s,” I said.

“Kind of a scrazy little bastard, ain’t he?” He laughed and dropped the jacket back in the suitcase.” (Mukherjee, 1989, pp. 113-14)

Jasmine is so much irritated by his abasement that she kills Half Face to take revenge for the rape and humiliation she went through. She feels everything that is dear to her is invaded by the dirty hands of Half Face. Therefore, she burns them all in a metal trash bin imitating a *sati* ritual before leaving the motel.

She, thus, turns to violence in order to express the conflict she is experiencing. She stabs Half-Face to death, and in this act she finds the strength to continue living and vows to start a new life in America, separate from India and the naive identity of her past. As Ruppel states “instead of killing herself and passively conforming to an identity politics that would define her solely as a victim, she decides instead to kill her attacker” (as cited in Erten, 2013, p. 36) which means reclaiming her body. Hence Jasmine’s identity is formed not through construction alone, but also by the destruction of her existing self. As Burton argues, instead of taking her life, she kills a part of her old identity in order to be “born again”. Her murderous tendencies are enacted on the man who had smuggled her into the US and subsequently violated her. “In the novel’s epiphanous episode, she transforms from the role of Sita—compliant, dutiful and obedient wife—to that of Kale—messenger of death, source of destructive energy, provider of renewal and re-birth” (Burton, 2007, p. 88). She had the mission of taking her husband’s suit to America where her husband studied, and burning herself with the suit performing *sati* as an obedient, *pativrata* Indian wife. But in course of her journey, she slits her rapist in the form of goddess Kali and begins new journey.

After killing her violator there in Florida she then instead of cremating herself, decides to move on and arrives at the house of Lillian Gordon, a lady who helps and shelters her. Staying with Gordon, she begins her process of assimilation by learning how

to become American. There she gets nickname 'Jazzy', a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes gladly. After that she moves in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York. She soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home for it was completely isolated from everything American. Considering it to be a stasis in her progression towards a new life, she tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and forget her past completely.

Having spent a few days with Lillian Gordon, she comes to Flushing, New York, where she first works as a day-care provider to Taylor and Wylie's adopted daughter, Duff and their *au pair*. There she gets another identity; Taylor calls her 'Jase'. Jase's friendship with Taylor grows then. But though Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased. They emerge in specific moments in the text and exacerbate the tension, thereby causing her to create another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before. While living with the Hayes, she begins to master the English language, empowering herself to further appropriate American culture.

Jasmine makes effort to manipulate herself as American and goes through various transformations. She sustains herself in an alien country by her own efforts. Jafir (2015) in this context argues,

A strong woman, Jasmine navigates in an apparently effortless manner between time, location, memory, desire and self-perception and re-creates herself without disintegrating. Through the horrendous ordeals that she undergoes—assassinations, clandestine immigration, rape, murder, and constant displacements, she retains her stability and emerges unbroken if not unscathed. (p. 59)

From the very beginning, Jasmine challenges even the fate. She makes a journey from the suppressive patriarchal Indian tradition to the liberation in her life. She sets for a journey to America with a 'mission', to fulfill her husband's wishes. She enters America with forged documents, learns English and American ways and emerges several times as a transformed woman. In her journey for the disintegrated self, she suffers from various vulnerabilities.

Jasmine is rescued by a Quaker woman, Lillian Gordon, who helps illegal immigrants to survive in United States. She not only gives Jasmine new hopes, she also teaches her how to walk and talk in American ways so that the immigration officials would not recognize her as illegal entry. She teaches her American ways and to be a confident woman. She becomes a secret guide to her which helps her to start a new life in the United States without being caught by the immigration authority. She tries hard under Gordon's instruction to manipulate herself in American ways. She says, "I worked hard on the walk and deportment" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 133) as Mrs. Gordon instructed her. Gordon advises Jasmine during her stay with her, "Let the past make you wary by all means. But do not let it deform you" (p. 131). In fact, Jasmine has suffered in several ways. She has to overcome the death of her husband from bomb explosion in India, being raped by the Half-Faced and the subsequent murder of him during her early times in America, and problem of settlement there. So, this advice of Gordon is very important for her that she has to learn from the past and make her future. She always remains grateful for the kindness and compassion Lillian Gordon displayed during those early months in Florida.

Mrs. Gordon gives Jasmine her daughter's clothes, shelter and new American identity by renaming her 'Jazzy'. At this juncture, Jasmine undergoes a physical transformation as well. The American clothes "disguised [her] widowhood" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 145). Her

new look and clothes make her act and behave more like an American woman.

Jasmine strives to set her new identity in the mainstream American society. She does not believe in the fixed identity rather accepts the fluidity of immigrants' identity. Her life focuses on the search for an individual identity for an immigrant woman (Tai, 2016). Mukherjee portrays Jasmine creating her multiple identities based on different scenario and experiences in her life. In her journey, as Tai (2016) indicates, Jasmine "metamorphoses" (66) from one identity to another. She must go through several rebirth and renaming to assume the American identity. More importantly, she possesses the characteristics necessary to adapt and reshape herself in order to survive in America.

Jasmine spends five months in Professor Vadhera's house in New York. With Vadhera, she expresses her strong desire to get "a green card even a forged one" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 148) so that she can feel safe to go outside as she says, "I wanted a green card more than anything else in the world that a green card was a freedom" (p. 149). When she manages to get the forged green card, she decides to leave Professor Vadhera's apartment and "takes one more plunge into America" (Umadevi, 2012, p. 611) determining to make her own living.

Jasmine gets a chance to work as care-giver to Duff, the little daughter of Wylie and Taylor. There as Umadevi is observes, she gets another identity 'Jase' by Taylor and "starts her transformation into a sophisticated American woman" (p. 611). She becomes more intimate to Taylor. For Taylor and Wylie, "[she] wanted to become the person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 171). In fact, Jasmine desires to challenge the reality, the past, and wants to reconstruct the future. She desperately wants to change herself. She wants to be "cosmopolitan" (Remigio, 2008, p. 55) and refined; she wants to be the person as they see in the present not as in the past. Remigio (2008) also examines, "To achieve that sense of belonging, Jasmine learns material culture as if she were learning a new language" (p. 56) because it is culture she is struggling with both to defy it and assimilate with it. She continues to say, "All become my language, which I learned like a child, from the first words up" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 174). Learning a new culture involves learning its grammar from the very basic things like dressing and fooding. Jasmine is learning American culture similar to language that begins from words. It is because she has to make her independent identity in an alien culture.

Jasmine's intimacy with Taylor and her desire for belongingness does not remain long lasting when she encounters the Sikh terrorist, Sukhwinder who had killed her husband Prakash, observing her. After the encounter with Sukhwinder in New York, she is filled with traumatic experiences. The past creeps in her memory, she loses her sense of self-expression and being unable to live with plethora of conflicting identities, she decides to move to Iowa to give her life new beginning where she meets Bud Ripplemeyer, a banker, and stays with him. Her main reason for running away is the fear that her presence in their household may jeopardize the safety of Taylor and Duff. "She runs away for life, not escaping from life" (Umadevi, 2012, p. 611), which is again the positive step. There she becomes a caregiver to Bud and Du, a sixteen-year old Vietnam War victim, adopted by Bud. Bud renames Jasmine 'Jane' yet another sign of her evolution. Violence ruins again her mood of life and Bud becomes cripple waist downwards by a farmer. By the end of the novel she is heading out once again to California to live with Taylor who has recently divorced.

During her journey, as Erten (2013) indicates, Jasmine is the object of male domina-

tion starting within her family and going on with the men in her life. She is exposed to violence, rape, desire and lust all by men. Every time she runs away, she comes across with another man to control her life. Thus, she is unable to break the circle that prevents her finding her own identity totally. Finally, she chooses Taylor instead of Bud, which is the necessary step to break the circle.

On the one hand, Jasmine maintains herself as a subversive resistant woman whether against the fortune teller's prediction of her future or the rapist Half-Face later on. On the other hand, she remains a victim throughout the text. As Ananja indicates, "in the first half of the novel, she is the victim of her third world father and the first world rapist; in the second half, she is the victim of author's colonizing narrative perspective" (as cited in Burton, 2007, p. 88). Ananja continues, "She is the victim in the hands of third world patriarchy and economics, and of first world imperialism" (p. 88). Though she is trapped in between this duality and ambivalence, her effort to rise above the subaltern status plays significant role in her life and in the establishment of her identity.

In the novel, Mukherjee encapsulates many aspects of immigrants' experience in America. In the process, the novelist reveals the ways in which newcomers from the third world are being absorbed by and, at the same time, transforming the American society. The process of transformation as Jyoti, Jasmine and Jane is figuratively centered in the death of one's own self and the birth of new self. It is a motif, a symbolism of cyclical patterns of birth, death and rebirth in this context of post-colonial immigrant woman's life (Tandon, 2004). Mukherjee herself, born to high-caste privilege in India, rejects earlier diasporic writing conventions that focus on the nostalgic loss of homeland and cultural identity, and instead opts for an alternative immigrant narrative, one that seeks to change the very notion of what it means to be American.

Jasmine's mobility from one self to another is operated by the necessities of her existence. She shows the power to assimilate with different circumstances to make her existence. In fact, she defines herself with her male counterpart each time. She says, "I had a husband for each of the woman I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 197). Each time she gets a new life.

As Erten (2013) states, "living for today becomes Jasmine's motto in America where nothing lasts forever, but learning how to live for herself and today, and bringing her fragmented self together is her challenge" (37) that is clear in her words:

Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff's day mummy and Taylor and Wylie's au pair in Manhattan; that Jasmine isn't this Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch with Mary Webb at the University Club today. And which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms? (Mukherjee, 1989, p.127)

Once she was married she became Jasmine, someone with no trace of the small village girl she once was. However, when she killed the man that raped her on her journey from India to the America, she discards altogether the remains of anything that she held close from India. This was as close as she has come to a physical reincarnation since she cleanses the body and soul through a righteous act and gains clarity.

Through Jasmine, Mukherjee wants to convey the message that change, transformation, fluid identity, adaptability and finally assimilation are keys to the survival for immigrants. Death of Jasmine's different selves presents the fragmented life that the immigrants have to go through. Jasmine, in the novel, according to Warhol (2011) is "neither Indian,

nor American, both Indian and American; she enacts the cosmopolitan identity” (p.53). The novel, in fact, presents Jasmine’s search for unfragmented identity through assimilation, though at every stage of her life there is terror, violence and fear. She experiences cultural conflict, and always struggles for some new identity.

CONCLUSION

Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* deals with a young Indian widow’s successful attempt to reshape her destiny and her happiness in an alien land. From the rural Indian culture, the protagonist Jasmine goes to America where she encounters several difficulties and courageously overcomes them. She constantly changes herself during her life journey, which starts from Jyoti the village girl in Hasnapur, to Jasmine, the city woman, to Jazzy, the undocumented immigrant, to Jase, the Manhattan Nanny, to Jane, the Iowan woman who enters the story and finally sets to move to California. Throughout the novel, she strives to fit herself in the American society and finally becomes able to settle there, adapts the American way of life and asserts her identity.

The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation makes the novel oriented towards a quest for identity in an alien land through the main character Jasmine. As she experiences the displacement and dislocation in her life, she tends to more adapt the foreign culture suppressing the past for a different present. Though she shuttles between past and present, she tries to restrain the past to make her identity coherent, and establish the ‘self’ more assertively.

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