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LIFE ACROSS THE COUNTRY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO BHARATI
MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE*

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ABSTRACT

Many people are attracted to one country or to the other and so they would naturally develop a desire to visit their spot, either for a vocation or for a job or to study or to even lead their life. Especially the people who wish to live in a new country will not only give them a fresh experience and exciting memories, but also makes them hard as they miss their culture, tradition, family and in short their home land, that makes them sick. In this way how Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* conveys the life across the country is the main focus of this paper.

Key Words: Life, abroad, identity, nativity, immigrant

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Bharati Mukherjee who is a multi-faceted personality as a professor, novelist, essayist, short-story writer and travelogue was born in Calcutta, India. Though she was born in India, has travelled to few countries like England, Switzerland, Europe, Canada, New York and U.S. she being a women and an immigrant, by visiting few abroad countries, personally encountered several ups and downs and thus gathered various experience. So this gathered experience propelled her to write more about Multi-cultural and immigrant issues, in her works. In this way, her third novel *Jasmine* witness about a young women who is an Indian, settles in America is trying to adapt the American life style is meeting various crises to survive and get her identity.

In *Jasmine* (1989) the protagonist though was born in a village, travels across the country from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. As the protagonist moves from one place to the other, her name changes again and again from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jane. Having passed various geographical locations, the protagonist undergoes different roles such as widow, wife, daughter, care-taker, beloved and professionalist. However she managed each role, yet her conflict between two cultures of east and west, her memories of past life in India and life in America, makes her struggle for her individuality and survival. In fact her journey itself acts as a tale and helps Jasmine to develop and awaken multiple identities in her and raises her moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertation.

For an instance, Jyoti as she was born in rural is brought up under rigid and patriarchal pressure by her father and brother in India. At one stage, she marries to a modern thinking Prakesh who is well bread and educated man. He takes Jyoti to America where he changes her name as Jasmine and encourages her to learn

English. But when Prakesh passes away again Jasmine comes back to India and gets a dilemma life as whether to lead a widow in India or liberated as an American. At one stage, she understands and wished to fulfill the dream of her husband. So she sets her trip to Florida. There she strives to set a new ideas and values to embellish new cultural. This modifies her character, skills and habits that as a result changed her attitude to move free with men.

Jasmine's survival skill and new desires helps her, to slowly set her journey to California. Later she also moves to New York where she is flexible to adopt the life according to the city and the country. When she met Taylor, she was changed as Jane and later again her meeting with Bud changed her name as Jazz. Here again she gets a new transformation. However her experience paved her way and with that she roaded a map and in spite of various struggle, tackled to control the life between traditional and modern world. The protagonist meeting with Lillian Gordon again transforms her into Jazzy that symbolically makes her to accept the American culture. She too very happily accepted as she considered that she is progressing towards a fresh life.

Towards the end Jasmine assimilated, associated, accepted and adjusted herself with any new community in order to find her new identity. This has been rightly said by Mukherjee as, to make people realize that we have to get away from thinking of ourselves, of our identities as fixed, as dependent only on inherited things: language, race, class, culture. And instead of improvising identity, to see ourselves as part of a changing community in which our loyalty depends on what community in which our loyalty depends on what community we have adopted and decided to give our loyalty to...I believe immigrants, if this is where their life is, should invest into this society rather than into nostalgia about the past and become a citizen and exercise rights so they can't be taken away.

Thus one can understand that changes are often happening event and hence Jasmine's life and her identity keep changing.

To conclude, through the novel *Jasmine*, it is very clear to read the problem of an immigrant, especially of women who are trying to lead across their life that crush their native identity and makes them to cope with a foreign land. However Jasmine uses the opportunities and facilities that were offered to her and is trying to teach us through her experience to consider every culture as unique and to focus only on one's improvement.

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