

The Pangs of Transition in Bharathi Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

Leelarajakumari. P

Lecturer in English

K L University, Guntur dist

Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Changes in the journey of life are inevitable. The effects they have are like sudden jolts of pain or joy. Bharathi mukherjee depicts these pangs of transitions through the tale of a typical Hindu girl Jyothi who transformed into various characters and played various roles due to the demands of her fate.

Jyothi was born into a family which was already "burdened" by four daughters in hasnapur .she was a beautiful child which made her mother worry about her groom as the family could not afford a worthy one. Those were the times in hasnapur when the parents bothered only about their girl child's dowry but not her education.

Jyothi was fortunate to have a wise masterji, who supported her education. He taught her English and tried to quench her thirst for knowledge and new things by providing her books and education. Ironically Jyothi was once warned by a sage about her ill- fate, widowhood and exile. That encounter with the sage was the point in her life when she decided what she doesn't want to become. Her dis - belief in the words of the sage made him push her aside giving her a star- shaped bruise... 'You have been scared for her life' her sister commented. But she was not willing to agree 'this is my third eye she defended. She was determined.

Pressure came from the elders of her family to marry her to a widow for no dowry to a rich family. She resisted with the help of her mother and masterji.

The sudden death of her father shook Jyothi. It was then she formed an opinion on life and the reason for survival. "God sends us on an assignment and calls back after its accomplishment." Were the words which enlightened her? She began wondering about her assignment. The unfortunate incident changed the course of the family. Jyothi brother sold their fields and put up a scooter repair shop to look after the household. The brother hosted some political talk one day with akhalsa lion sukhwinder when discussion got heated up. Those were the times when rebels became terrorist and created havoc under the hood of religion. Khalsa lions were one such group. The day their discussion became frightening. At that moment Jyothi was first time heard appealing voice of prakash who brought peace by defeating sukhwinder with reasoning. Prakash remained in jyothi's mind for days. Her brother's recognized this interest and arranged their meeting and later Jyothi and prakash were happily married. "He wanted to break down the Jyothi as 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....Jyothi, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities." (77)

Prakash was an educated man who has a broad mind. He never let the orthodox traditions grip their life. They lived in a busy city, where prakash worked and studied. Jyothi supported him and were obedient to him, she admired his ideology. Prakash was a bright student and had a professor working aboard. The professor's call to join him

encouraged parkas. Parkas who was then vexed with the black market and people he was working for waited for the chance to go abroad.

Jyothi respected prakash vision and hoped for it to happen. Encouraged by her husband she worked on electronics along with him. The couple dreamt of vijn and wife electronic store. A business built on hope.

Much awaited opportunity came to prakash in the form of an admission letter from Tampa. The couple rejoiced. Prakash assured his jasmine of their reunion and explained her about the new life ahead. Their happiness was not forever. The couple fell prey to the political riots. A radio blast in a cloth store left jasmine hopeless killing prakash. Jasmine was terrified when she recognized sukhwinder the man behind the blast. She screamed and pleaded to the officials for avenge with no hope.

Jyothi was named jasmine by prakash. Playing the role of a loyal wife she transformed into jasmine. Prakash and jasmine was a content couple living on faith.

Jasmine had to return to her Jyothi life at hasnapur. She had to sit along with the other widows and lead a meaningless life. She felt that this change is burning her from within. She realized that her mission her assignment is to fulfill her husband's dream. She decided to go to tamph.

She faced severe disagreement from elders of the family, their cursed her and her fate but that didn't move her a bit. Finally her brother arranged for her journey.

Jasmine started her mission and remained determined facing hardships, insults, humiliations throughout her journey. She met many people, exiles like her and others. Their relations were for a short period. Neither hellos nor farewells. But, one day a co-passenger surprised her by giving her a knife as farewell gift. On her cruise she met a man half-face, as all the other's called him. She got off the ship and stepped into her first day in the foreign land, u.s. she didn't know where to go, how to reach tamph. Half face offered her help and she was glad for that.

Nothing is smooth. She was shocked to see the other half of half face who helped her to satisfy his own greed. She felt cheated she wanted to end her life the same night half face dishonored her. But, she realized her mission. "I will not let my personal dis-honored disrupt my mission" she thought. This incident brought change in her mind-set. She stabbed half face with her gifted knife. She turned stone hearted; strong she stepped into a new life on her first dawn in America.

She trailed direction along the wasteland. She begged for water but none seemed to notice her. Suddenly a ray of hope came in the form of Lillian. Lillian Gordon helped her and gave her shelter and food. Lillian didn't care about jasmine past, she just took care of her like a child and molded into an American lady jazzy. Lillian wanted to give her a new life recognizing the hidden intellect in jazzy. And no jasmine under guidance of Gordon became jazzy and decided to meet professor vadhera to finish off her mission. Gordon asks her daughter to help jazzy and sent her to the professor.

Change is inevitable and also sudden. Jazzy realized this upon death of Lillian. Lillian was arrested for not disclosing the details of the exiles she saved and fell ill. On permission she spent her last days in the house where she gave shelter to jasmine and others. After her death the place was converted into a resort. Jazzy was surprised to note how things changed so fast and how fate brings them about.

Jazzy went to professor vadhera whose household resembles that of a typical hasnapur even in the u.s. The family was kind enough to take care of jasmine their disciple's wife. Jazzy served them as jasmine and like a family, they lived an Indian life in foreign. During the time of happiness and crisis she felt she was so dependent and this is something that couldn't be changed. But yes the change came in her mindset brought about by an incident. Vadhera's father slipped and got injured, and jasmine was sent to get professor's help. then, she was shocked to witness the true professional of mr.vadhera, a human hair sorter. she realized that he wanted to work in foreign, he needn't like his work. This made jasmine think that she needed to live on her own. She cried and requested mr.vadhera, a to get her a greencard, and the expenses as a loan. mr.vadhera agreed he offered her the money in return to her hair which is really worthy thing to sell due to its purity and originality. Jasmine later found her calling Gordon's daughter.

Ms.Gordon offered her a job at Taylor's place to look after their daughter. She felt that it was a fair job and however there is no going back. Jasmine went for the job and stayed with the Taylor's family who were kind as well as humourous. they called her jase and now jase loved j\her life. She was earning well and loved taking care of their daughter. She also spent for herself this made her happy she wanted this to be forever... the little girl called jase day mummy. And jase was very happy indeed to play that role. Mrs. Gordon who supports and helps her to rehabilitate, transforms her totally. Within a week Jasmine gives up her shy side of personality and dresses up on a jazzy T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes. With the change in clothes comes the change in the culture so much so that the intrinsic qualities of her personality start disappearing. With this change she moves from being a "visible minority" to being just another immigrant."⁴

Nothing is forever. The mother of her day child wanted to leave Taylor. she fell in love with someone else jase couldn't stand this. She couldn't see the family splitting. She was told that Taylor loved her and they could live together. But, jase was not ready to accept this change.

But that couldn't be stopped Taylor's wife left him and his daughter. Taylor was unhappy one day they went to a park along with the kid. Taylor was prepared to ask jase to stay with them forever. Her destiny is unimaginable..... she choked and fainted as she saw sukhwinder in the park. The man is responsible for prakash's death. She felt that he was conspiring against her for the complaint. She felt insecure. She wanted to leave taylor. she felt helpless. She just wanted Taylor and the girl to be happy, safe. unwillingly she decided to leave for Iowa.

Iowa is the place she chose because it was the native of Taylor's adopted child. She felt this was a silly logic but she stood by it.

Jase went to iowa. she went; in search of livehood. fortunately mother ripplemeyer was kind enough to take case of her. She was another Lillian in jasmine's life. Jase meets bud ripplemeyer in the bank and he fell in love with her. bud leaves his wife kate. kate gets angry with jasmine that is responsible for their break up and calls her a tornado. At this stage jasmine felt that her path left nothing but destruction behind. Jasmine lost prakash, jazzy killed half face, jase proved a threat to Taylor and now Jane responsible for bud's break up.

But bud's Jane served him with great responsibility. She looked after him and severed him when he was crippled. But Jane even feels responsible for bud's accident. She couldn't guess the threat factor when an angry farmer came to meet bud.now,she felt she could do nothing but serve him. She played the role of his caretaker, his Jane.

Bud and Jane adopted dual child who went through many hardships and an exiled shared similar past with jane.humiliations, hardlife, prejudices and particularly an alien in the society.jane though of his sister's age could look after du like his mother. She shared her secrets and shadows of her past with him.fu was thankful to her, welcomed her kindness her caring and love.

Those were hard times for farmers and bud being a banker was blamed for many reasons. To make things worse bud had to deal with his best friend's son darrel.darrel became constable on sudden inheritance of vast land. He being less experienced and a fresh graduate wanted to sell the ancestral property and move to mexico.bud was against this and considered this decision immature.jane had to deal with these men who were on different ways.

Jane was also carrying bud's child.bud is very thankful to her and wanted to marry her for the love and care she offered to him.jane was indecessive.she was unsure of her fate and afraid how a relationship with her might affect bud. She was indeed afraid of her stars. She couldn't explain her and reasons to bud. She said nothing.

Jane wanted something to change but was afraid of how it might come, how that would affect her, and the people around her.

Jane encountered a woman who was researching on life after death and revisiting souls. The woman happens to recognize Jane's nativity and offered to share some of her thought Jane reflected upon this idea. She felt that this was indeed true. She thought that Jyothi died after marriage and jasmine along with her husband. Her soul revisited as jazzy and survived till she turned into jase and now Jane is the only living part. She felt like a stone rolling and never aware of its destination only god knows where to send when this journey stops... 'That is the thesis of the novel-the moving identity, moving like an escalator, moving but still at the same time "Jyothi was now a sati-goddess, she had burned herself in a trash-can-funeral pyre behind a hoarded-up mooted in Florida. Jasmine lived for the future, for Vijn and wife..." (176)

Works Cited:

An interview conducted by Vrinda Nabar, "America revealed through an immigrant's eye," *The Times of India* (July 9, 1989), p.17.

Bharathi Mukherjee, *Jasmine* [New Delhi; Penguin Books (India), 1990

Anita Desai, *Cry the Peacock* (New Delhi: Orient paper Books, 1980)

Bharathi Mukherjee, *Darkness* [New Delhi: Penguin Books (India), 1990], p.2.

Ibid. p. 3.

Interview by Vrinda Nabar.