

Un-hyphenating Identity and The Assimilatory Strategies: Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine

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Diaspora Literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions. Basically diaspora is a movement or migration of a group of people such as those sharing a national or ethnic identity away from an established homeland and a diasporic individual is an individual who disperses from an original centre to at least two peripheral places and maintains a memory, vision or myth about his/her homeland. Bharati Mukherjee is one of the Indian diasporic writer whose most memorable works reflect her pride in her Indian heritage, but also her celebration of embracing America. As she said in an interview in the Massachusetts Review, "the immigrants in my stories go through extreme transformations in America and at the same time they alter the country's appearance and psychological make-up." 1 (645) In her own voice she tells the stories of her own experiences to show the changing shape of American society. She describes herself as unhyphenated American and not the hyphenated Indian-American title:

"I maintain that I am an American writer of Indian origin, not because I'm ashamed of my past, not because I'm betraying or distorting my past, but because my whole adult life has been lived here, and I write about the people who are immigrants going through the process of making a home here...." 2 (654)

Bharati Mukherjee considers her work a carnival of her sentiments, and herself a writer of the Indian diaspora who cherishes the "melting pot" of America. Her main theme throughout her writing discusses the condition of Asian immigrants in North America, with particular awareness towards the changes taking place in South Asian women in a new world. Her protagonists are well-aware of the viciousness and hostility that environ them and are often made victims by various forms of social restraint; she characterizes them as survivors. The phenomenon of migration, the condition of new immigrants, and the sensitivity of estrangement and alienation often experienced by expatriates and the struggle of Indian women as immigrants are the major themes of her novels. According to Fakrul Alam,

"her own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States has led to her current contentment of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants." 3 (Alam 10).

Bharati Mukherjee found herself discriminated and treated badly in Canada during her stay for 14 years, as she says, as a member of the "visible minority." She has spoken in many interviews of her difficult life in Canada, a country that she sees as hostile to its immigrants and one that opposes

the concept of cultural assimilation. Due to her thematic focus and cultural origin, she is often racially categorized, but she strongly opposes the use of hyphenation while discussing her origin and avoids "otherization" and the "self-imposed marginalization that comes with hyphenation." Rather, she prefers to be referred as an American of Bengali-Indian origin.

Jasmine, Mukherjee's most popularly read novel, is a story of a young girl Jyoti who uproots herself from her life in India and re-roots herself in search of a new life and the image of America. It is a story of dislocation and relocation. Jyoti, a young girl from a village of Hasnapur, marries a progressive young Indian man named Prakash Vijn. Jyoti dreams the culturally implanted dream of an old-world woman, of a life devoted to submission and subordination and service and prayer and the single-minded fulfillment of her highest duty in life—the welfare and comfort of her husband named Prakash Vijn who then renames her Jasmine. Prakash views her as both a sexual being and his caretaker, but without downgrading her to the edges of the "hyper-sexual mistress." He respects her privacy and space. As Prakash helps Jasmine in her transformation from "Jyoti" to "Jasmine," Jasmine distinguishes herself and turns into the figure that Prakash desires to create. She expresses:

"[Prakash] 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. . . Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities." 4 (pp. 77)

Jasmine's renaming becomes an indication of her latest and modern identity that represents her initial migration away from traditional Indian customs and culture. Jyoti and Jasmine both are two clearly different selves, yet Jasmine finds herself occupying both identities, "shuttling" between them and trying to understand the manner in which they both conflict and connect until she eventually becomes Jasmine. This transformation occurs through the means of traditional Indian male dominance because she changes herself because of her husband and becomes a contemporary and enlightened woman.

Unexpectedly Prakash is killed in a violent terrorist attack. Jasmine becomes alone and heartbroken. Her husband had cherished a dream of going to America, so she decides to pay a novel homage to his memory by burning his clothes at the same place where he had wanted to study. Heartbroken Jasmine decides to perform sati after fulfilling the dream of her husband and sets out for America to fulfill the life-long dream of her husband. She thinks, "Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine, and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash." 5 (pp. 97) On the last of her departed husband's money, she flies from India to Europe, takes a trawler to the West Indies, and then a shrimp boat to Florida.

When she arrives in the US, she soon becomes Jasmine from Jyoti and literally burns all of her baggage:

“My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for....I buttoned up the jacket and sat by the fire. With the first streaks of dawn, my first full American day, I walked out the front drive of the motel to the highway and began my journey, traveling light.” 6 (pp. 121)

Mukherjee thereby uses the image of sati to symbolically represent Jyoti's consignment to the flames of both her former life and her name, along with her physical baggage. Here loss of identity that accompanies Jasmine, from India through America, is figured as liberation rather than a restriction. When she sheds her previous life, she sheds with the oppression that all. Her primary self dies when she incinerates her husband's suit and the sari she was going to immolate herself.

Upon her arrival in Florida, Jasmine meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and at this point has her first encounter with American ethnic and racial categorizations. Finding herself without a place to stay and trusting Half-Face, Jasmine accepts his offer to allow him to accompany her. But the minute that they arrive at the motel, Half-Face being a devil reveals his true intentions and rapes her. Jasmine then stabs Half-Face to death and in this act finds the strength to continue living instead of committing sati over the burned clothing of her husband. Before murdering Half-Face who has raped her, she cuts her tongue. Like Kali, whose tongue drips blood, Jasmine spills blood from her own mouth on to the sleeping man she stabs. Jasmine in a truly feminist gesture killed the Devil incarnate and Bharati Mukherjee brilliantly fuses two archetypal images to enact the killing of Kali: The Goddess of Destruction and strength and the broken pitcher. Jasmine sheds her previous selves, and adapts to America. According to Bharati Mukherjee Jasmine becomes enable to do this, is not the optimism of America but it is “the long perspective” of her Hindu upbringing:

“In Hinduism one is trained to take the long perspective. The body and this life, the physical world around us is an illusion....Salvation means the knowledge that this body is simply a pitcher...a shell.” 7 (pp. 16)

Jasmine knows that “when a clay pitcher breaks, you see the air inside is same as outside.” 8 (15) She is broken but she survives. After the murder, Jasmine swears to start her own life in America, a life separate from the India and adolescent identity of her past. For Jasmine, the shock of her rape results in the greatest change in her identity. At one side she feels broken completely but on the other side this experience builds her up and allows her to come into her own. Though she does not have strength and power, she keeps her desire alive for change throughout the novel.

Jasmine then is picked up and rescued by a kindly Quaker woman, Lillian Gordon, who provides her with a temporary home, nurses her back to health and helps her understand American ways and customs. She teaches her how to become American and how to begin the process of assimilation. Lillian becomes the next figure in Jasmine's life to rename her and to give her the Westernized nickname "Jazzy," which seems to be a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of

American culture. When Jasmine moves in with Lillian, she learns how to walk, dress and speak so that she could be mixed up more easily and Lillian tells her, "...if you walk and talk American, they'll think you were born here. Most Americans can't imagine anything else.” 9 (pp. 134-135) Jasmine soon learns that "American" doesn't necessarily mean being white or actually born in the U.S., but rather it is the appropriation of cultural norms, of social behavior that defines what it is to be American. As Jasmine's self-perception changes, she moves toward becoming "Jazzy," believing that Jasmine is a self of the past, but this past is one that never truly disappears, as Jasmine soon learns.

After she collects herself and regains a certain degree of self-confidence, Jasmine leaves Lillian to move in with a traditional Indian family of professor Devender Vadhera in Flushing, New York. Jasmine soon discovers herself muffled by the indolence of this home, for it is completely isolated from everything American and there life seems inert and fastening to Jasmine. Jasmine feels as though she has simply wandered into a continuation of her former teenage days, and muses, "It was as though I had never left India... I had traveled the world without ever leaving the familiar crops of Punjab." 10 (pp. 83) Thoroughly upset by what she believes to be a stasis in her progression towards a new life, Jasmine intensifies her attempt to separate herself from all that is Indian by trying to forget her past completely. "In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-like.” 11 (pp. 145) Jasmine builds her life in America; she longs to forget her past and all the horrific experiences that still haunt her. "For me, experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill.” 12 (pp. 85) While Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased, for they emerge in specific moments in the text and exacerbate the tension between self-perceptions, thereby causing Jasmine to create yet another more dominant identity, different from all those that came before.

Jasmine moves to New York City to become the caregiver for an American family. She moves in with Taylor Hayes, a professor of physics, his wife Wylie Hayes and their daughter Duff, she creates yet another identity based upon a new perception of her. While living with the Hayes family, Jasmine begins to master the English language. Taylor begins to call her "Jase" and "Jassy," the Anglicized versions of her name that represent the emergence of her increasingly Westernized identity. Jasmine's comfort with English also provides her with a new perspective on America as well as a more familiar relationship with the culture as a whole as she says:

"Every morning, the news sank into my brain, and stayed. Language on the street, on the forbidden television, at the Haynes' dinners, where I sat like a guest and only helped with the serving (and, increasingly, controlled the menu), all became my language, which I learned like a child, from the first words up. The squatting fields of Hasnapur Receded fast.” 13 (pp. 88)

Through the master key of language Jasmine begins to understand American culture and claims it as her own, thereby allowing her to produce "Jase," who possesses a totally different realization than the earlier selves of "Jyoti," "Jasmine," or even "Jazzy." The new perception of "Jase" is

in fact more western and self-assured, full with a yearning to absorb as much of American culture as she possibly can, without fear or regret. Jasmine's perception of her race also changes dramatically in her time with the Hayes family. Taylor and his friends understand that Jasmine is South Asian, and they are interested in the specifics of her ethnic and cultural identity, although they still have a propensity to believe associations when they should not.

"Taylor's friends in New York used to look at me and say, 'You're Iranian, right?' If I said no, then, 'Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi?' They were strikingly accurate about most things, and always out to improve themselves. Even though I was just an au pair, professors would ask if I could help them with Sanskrit or Arabic, Devanagari or Gurumukhi script. I can read Urdu, not Arabic. I can't read Sanskrit. They had things they wanted me to translate, paintings they wanted me to decipher." 14 (pp. 33)

Taylor's friends recognize Jasmine as a woman from South Asian community, as opposed to Half-Face's racist generalization. They engage themselves with her on a level of ethnic specificity which shows that Taylor's friends are culturally aware and she values the endeavor. Because of her South Asian background, she is expected to know languages associated with South Asia, regardless of whether it is in fact her specific dialect. Taylor's friends feel interested because of her South Asian background and they know that she can assist them with and represents, which, in this case, is an entire set of cultures and nations. Jasmine's particular cultural differentiation is recognized and embraced in this community of people, but her racial identity is still subjected.

Though Taylor is married and has a daughter Duff, she falls in love with him; she desires to change herself into the individual she believes Taylor wants to see her as. She expresses her feelings: "The love I felt for Taylor that first day had nothing to do with sex. I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence and graceful self-absorption. I wanted to become the person [Taylor and Wylie] thought they saw.....Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful....." 15 (pp. 171) She attempts to transform herself into a woman who is confident and refined but somewhat neutral, and to a certain degree, the woman that she believes Taylor wants her to be. In contrast with previous identities, when she is with Taylor, Jasmine's transformation seems to stem not from a reaction, but rather from her incredibly longing for individual transform. Jasmine records the enormous differences in her identities:

"Jase was a woman who bought herself spangled heels and silk chartreuse pants...Jasmine lived for the future, for Viji & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today..... For every Jasmine the reliable caregiver, there is a Jase the prowling adventurer. I thrilled to the tug of opposing forces." 16 (pp. 176)

By the transformation of Jasmine in Jase, Jasmine is progressively more relaxed with her sexuality, but again has not entirely wiped away her past identity, for she retains elements of the "reliable caregiver" Jasmine. The relationship between Jasmine and Taylor ends unexpectedly when Sukhwinder, the killer of Prakash appears and she finds that her former selves of Jyoti and Jasmine begin to come into sight all at once, and her life suddenly becomes unclear by the different consciousnesses through which she now experiences the world. Upon viewing Sukhwinder,

Jasmine's reaction illustrates the collision of her various former selves:

"I couldn't look behind me, couldn't open my eyes. I could hear Taylor's voice from a long way off.. I wanted to talk, but my throat had sealed." 17 (pp. 188)

It symbolizes the leading role that Jasmine's past plays in her present life, the inescapability of memory, and the boundless nature of time and space in the text. Jasmine feels unable to express herself. Due to the simultaneous existence of the past and present, memories of India and her current life in America, Jasmine is forced to view herself from the perspectives of "Jasmine," "Jase," and "Jassy" all at once. Unable to live with this superfluity of conflicting identities, Jasmine flees to Baden County, Iowa to start her life over yet again.

Jasmine creates her final identity as Jane Ripplemeyer when she moves to Baden and meets Bud Ripplemeyer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. They eventually marry and Bud renames Jasmine "Jane," yet another evolution of her name and sign of her new identity initiated by a male figure in her life. Bud sees her as a sexual being as well as his companion. Jasmine knows this, and unequivocally states, "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." 18 (pp. 98) She allows herself to embrace her new identity and rejuvenates Bud's company by being the sexual, passionate and powerful woman as she now sees herself. Jasmine finds American culture and Baden County almost suitable, and she seems to be assimilated in it, adopts a completely new identity with ease. The "Jase" of New York now recedes so that Jane moves forward: "I whisper the name, Jase, Jase, Jase, as if I am calling someone I once knew." 19 (pp. 215) The Baden community also tried to Westernize Jasmine to make her more familiar instead of alien.

"In Baden, the farmers are afraid to suggest I'm different. They've seen the aero grams I receive, the strange lettering I can decipher. To them, alien knowledge means intelligence. They want to make me familiar. In a pinch, they'll admit that I might look a little different, that I'm a 'dark-haired girl' in a naturally blond county. I have a 'darkish complexion' (in India, I'm 'wheatish'), as though I might be Greek from one grandparent. I'm from a generic place, 'over there,' which might be Ireland, France, or Italy. I'm not a Lutheran, which isn't to say I might not be Presbyterian....." 20 (pp. 32)

Jasmine's new observation of her race is a vital aspect of her individuality as "Jane," for when she observes herself as being assimilated, she in fact becomes the "typical American" that she has always wanted to be. But Jasmine does not continue this stable life in Baden and desires more exploration and commotion, and flourishes the existence of transform in her life. At the end of the novel she deserts Bud and moves to California with Taylor which suggests that she will create yet another identity for her new environment, wherever that location may be. This sense of movement at the end of the novel further supports the concept that Jasmine's identity is everlastingly growing in relation to her surroundings.

While describing her various identities, Jasmine says, "I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali." 21 (pp. 197) She expresses the progress of these identities in a style which suggests that she has chosen a husband for each self, rather than her husband's themselves influencing the creation of Jasmine's selves. Prakash renames her Jasmine, she describes this new identity as purely his creation, with almost no action on her part, but with Half-Face, Jasmine begins to create a new self in response to her experiences, as expressed through her violent behavior that she later characterizes as a representation of the goddess Kali. When Jasmine becomes Jase with Taylor, she actively creates this new self: "Taylor didn't want to change me.. I changed because I wanted to." 22 (pp. 185) Finally with Bud, Jane is created by her as a product of her desire to change and she describes: "Plain Jane is all I want to be. In Baden, I am Jane almost." 23 (pp. 26)

Jyoti, Jasmine, Jane, Jase, each of her different identities, took place in a different space, i.e. India, Florida, and New York, Iowa. Such a character who embraces wanderings is attempting to destroy traditional ways of conceiving female identity. She is marginalized by both gender and race and changes herself according to her surroundings which are characterized by an ever-changing uncertainty just as Jasmine herself is. Her continuous movement and vagueness in which nothing was rooted anymore and everything was in motion, makes her a diasporic individual. Jasmine remarkably describes this sense of impermanence when she describes about her diasporic experience:

"We are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges.. taking out for the hundredth time an aerogram promising.. a passport, a visa, a laissez-passer.. We are the outcasts and deportees.. landing at the end of tarmacs.. roughly handled and taken to waiting rooms.. We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through, to continue.. For us, there is only a slate and someone who remembers to write in chalk, DELAYED, or TO BE ANNOUNCED, or OUT OF SERVICE...What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues.. The zigzag route is straightest." 24 (pp. 100-101)

Jasmine starts her journey from India and uproots and re-roots herself and survives in all odd circumstances. Mukherjee introduces Jasmine's existence as two opposite poles: her beginnings as Jyoti, in an Indian village, and her life as Jane Ripplemeyer, in Iowa. Mukherjee, raised in an orthodox Hindu family, and educated in India and Iowa, knows both these world. Like Jasmine, she has had to re-invent herself to survive. Mukherjee represents a strategy of negotiation between East and West and a strategy of assimilation which neither privileges the dominant nor apologizes for the marginal. By assimilating in American culture Jasmine creates various identities and survives. The diasporic experiences of Jasmine's life of constant change and transformation are articulated by her as she says,

"I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness...We've stowed away on boats...we've hurtled through time tunnels. We've seen the worst and survived. Like creatures in fairy tales, we've shrunk and we've swollen and we've swallowed the cosmos whole." 25 (pp. 240)

Bharati Mukherjee carefully portrays the diasporic experiences when Jasmine swallows the cosmos whole. It seems to advocate that the nature of the diasporic experience is not completely negative and it adds something positive from the experience itself for the diasporic individual. To swallow the cosmos in its whole and survive is an accomplishment and that is exactly same what Jasmine does when she bears "the worst," and is subjected to the eccentricity of a destiny that assaults her until she faces all the sufferings. Though the diasporic individual may travel a rather difficult "zigzag route," but it simultaneously endows with her with the vigor and strength to go on along the path toward a destination that is always within reach but rarely truly tangible.

Un-hyphenating identity within Jasmine is flexible, persistently growing and completely erratic. Throughout her life, Jasmine creates many selves, and with awareness she continues to create even more identities. She wonders, "How many more shapes are in me, how many more selves, how many more husbands." 26 (pp. 215) en Jasmine leaves Baden at the end of the novel, she embraces an uncertain future that parallels her identity. While Jasmine has, for the moment, ceased to be Jane Ripplemeyer, no one knows her future even she also does not know and it reflects:

"I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through windows. Watch me reposition the stars.. Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope." 27 (pp. 240-241)

This tornado of a life, which bring in it the transformation of Jyoti, each time with a new name is the endless journey in search of "wants" and "hopes". This is a the story of a diasporic individual's life which transformed, transfigured and displaced. This is a tale of an immigrant, whose has a desire to cast off previous identities and to take up new selves, elicit change in society, and chase a moving target of assimilation which, like "want" and "greed", is never stationary by design. Jasmine with a quality of uplifting adaptability moves forward whole-heartedly and embraces the new traditions and customs of the country of choice for abode, without hesitation and expresses her feelings as diasporic individual:

"the speed of transformation, the fluidity of American character and the American landscape. I feel at times like a stone 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." 28 (pp. 138-139).

Homi Bhabha describes this new identity in the concern of the Du's and Jasmynes, who adapt to change and cross the borders between old world and new world, using need as a guiding standard and passion as a strength for accepting new environment. This, as Bhabha writes, is how the future is made:

"The present of the world, which appears through the break-

down of temporality, signifies a historical intermediacy, familiar to the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* (deferred action): "a transference function, whereby the past dissolves in the present, so that the future becomes (once again) an open question, instead of being specified by fixity of the past." 29 (pp. 219)

The questions of identity, the struggle for assimilation, the yearning for acceptance—secrets shared by immigrants who strive to conform, who adjust to adapt, who emulate to blend capture the attention. Mr. Skola, Du's teacher, talks to Jane about her adopted son's performance in class, but the conversation sounds more like a testimonial to Du's 'otherness' than a progress report:

"I tried a little Vietnamese on him," Mr. Skola went on, "and he just froze up." I suppressed my shock, my disgust. This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing. How dare you? What must he have thought? His history teacher in Baden, Iowa, just happens to know a little street Vietnamese? Now where would he have picked it up? There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams. All this I should have explained to the red-faced, green-shirted, yellow-tied Mr. Skola. Instead I said, "Du's first few weeks with us, my husband thought we had an autistic child on our hands!" 30 (pp. 29)

Du, the 14-year old Vietnamese boy, an adopted son of Jane, functions textually as Jane's doppelganger: he, like Jyoti, moved to America after suffering from physical and psychological violence. Jyoti gets caught up in the Sikh separatist conflicts in Punjab; while Du experiences this kind of life in the refugee camp in Vietnam:

"He'd two lives, one in Saigon and another in the refugee camp. In Saigon he'd lived in a house with a large family, and he'd been happy. He doesn't talk much about the refugee camp, other than that his mother cut hair, his older brother raised fighting fish, his married sister brought back live crabs and worms for him to eat whenever she could sneak a visit from her own camp. From a chatty agency worker we know that Du's mother and brother were hacked to death in the fields by a jealous madman, after they'd gotten visas." 31 (pp. 18)

Like Jasmine, he also sheds his former life upon his arrival, and throws himself wholeheartedly into his new life, watching sitcoms, eating at McDonalds, and acquiring English:

"Du is a Ripplemeyer. He was Du Thien...he does well, though he's sometimes contemptuous. He barely spoke English when he arrived; now he's fluent, but with a permanent accent. 'Like Kissinger', he says." 32 (pp. 13)

Jane and Du both suffer a lot in their lives so because of their past lives, both Du and Jane seem to share some sort of bond; as she says, 'once upon a time, like me, he was someone else. We've been many selves' 33 (pp. 214). Not only does Du transform himself, but he also transforms his environment. As Mukherjee notes,

"I'm writing about the way that America has been Vietnamized, and the way my characters are being Americanized." 34 (Vitale, 1992, audio interview).

Jasmine experiences rape, murder, suicide, violent shooting and betrayal but heads West with all that the American myth symbolizes: freedom, equality and fulfillment. She undertakes a series of identities closely related to the men she met in search of a new life and for a new self. Eschewing duty for desire, she leaves the invalid Bud for a younger prettier man, Taylor, symbolizing a romanticized spirit of freedom and adventure, thinking she is behaving as an American. She creates her un-hyphenating identity as an American at last.

Mukherjee's Jasmine is the celebration of a forever-evolving identity, one that is constantly moving as quickly as cultural connections are lost and found in the diasporic experience, resulting in the creation of selves. The push and pull of two opposing cultures among diasporic South Asian women allows for the possibility of possessing modified aspects of both cultures at same time. In her study of female Indian immigrants in New York, Madhulika Khandelwal observed the following:

"The lives of these Indian immigrant women.... were not monochromatic studies of bewildered traditional women adrift in the United States. Neither were their experiences simple linear transitions from Indian to modern Western society. Indian Women's experiences and viewpoints varied widely, running along class and generational lines. Significantly, few women were inclined to reject wholesale their cultural traditions for American social patterns and values. Instead, the sense prevailed, that they faced the challenges of redefining their traditions and roles in the migration context." 35 (113)

Un-hyphenating identity is not so much the act of choosing between two cultures, but rather it is having the power to redefine the terms of cultural practices and customs to fit one's own experience. Seen in this sense, the story is explored by crossing American-Indian borders, the borders between good and evil, innocence and guilt, subjectivity and objectivity and by assimilating strategies to create an un-hyphenating identity of Jasmine. For Bharati Mukherjee's success in creating it, Alam says:

"She has been able to bring to her first hand experience of exile, expatriation and immigration her considerable narrative skills and a lively imagination to produce memorable and colourful tales of excitement as well as traumas of adjusting to a new world." 36 (147)

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