Chapter Three

Issues of Immigration

Immigrants are people who come to a country to take permanent residence. They have an intention for their stay where as the expatriates’ intention is not clear. In this chapter the issues of immigration are discussed in detail. For this study Bharati Mukherjee’s second short story collection, The Middleman and the other Stories and her third novel Jasmine are taken.

Disappointed with Canadian unfriendly and antagonistic atmosphere Bharati Mukherjee migrated to the United States. This constant state of relocation has its influence on Mukherjee’s progress as a writer. Alam says that her works emphasis on the “phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants and the feeling of alienation often experiences by expatriates” (7). She obviously marks a difference between expatriation and immigration, demanding that in Canada she is forever the expatriate, the temporary inhabitant, whereas in the United States she is an immigrant and is acceptable with the enthusiasm of immigration. America has showed out an eventual end point for her. Consequently, her fiction in an image of the personality and temper of the contemporary American culture, as practiced by immigrants in America. Alam says, “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” (10).

Immigration has attained a sea change in Mukherjee’s opinions and approaches concerning diaspora. Contrasting the expatriate with his longing for the past, immigrant falls into the present and becomes actively involves in the atmosphere around him. However the expatriate displays agony grievance, the immigrant rejoices
the fact of being alive in a new world, of being reborn. Immigrants are active, strong and talented to agree changes. They themselves in their environment and the adaptation involved in immigration does not mean a rejection of the past. It only means giving up an inflexible holding on to the past.

Mukherjee’s stories from the second collection, *The Middleman and Other Stories* and *Jasmine* point out acculturation and integration in the development of identity search. She inscribes in the custom of immigrant experience rather than of nostalgia and expatriation. Her conversion from expatriate into immigrant is the first-hand experience to comprehend and ability to speak the difficulties of identity formation in the new world. She published the second collection of short story *The Middleman and Other Stories* after three years of publication of *Darkness*. She receives the National Book Critics Circle Award for the best fiction of the year 1988. This award catapulted her to a unique position as an immigrant writer.

Her aim is to travel around Americans to the active voices of immigrants in America not only through her writing but by cutting out and look over the fiction of the writers from non-traditional nations like India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, South Africa etc., who are altering the construction of American fiction. *The Middleman and Other stories* tells the stories of immigrants’ re-rootedness and enhousement in North America to achieve the new identity. The researcher has depicted the issues of immigrants of Indian origin in the United States in the stories such as “A Wife’s Story”, “The Tenant”, “Management of Grief”, “and Danny’s Girl”.

The protagonists such as Mrs. Panna Bhatt in “A Wife’s Story”, Maya Sanyal in “The Tenant” and Mrs.Shaila Bhave in “Management of Grief “ and Danny Sahib in “Danny’s Girls” - the Indian women immigrants. They are intelligent adequate to sort out the difficulties they come across in the process of immigration. They look
forward, aware in the present and ponder of the future. But as Oscar Handlin writes, “The history of immigration is the history of alienation and its consequences for every freedom won, a tradition lost for the gains of goods and services, and identity lost, and uncertainty found” (58). They swing between the two extremes of identity.

The immigrants’ fight to keep up their sense of themselves and their ethics while assimilating to new cultural environments for new identity, is prevalent. “A Wife’s Story” is a prevailing expression of the existence nature of an Indian woman. The protagonist here is an Indian, Mrs. Panna Bhatt, who goes to America for Ph.D. degree leaving her husband in India. She is very strong to make somewhat of her life and recognises completely well that in order to stay alive in America she has to walk out of the limitations of an old-fashioned Indian wife. She changes herself as an immigrant to meet the difficulties of America.

An Indian wife can certainly not think of make friends with any other man since for her even the recollection of others is a symbol of unfaithfulness. But Panna makes friend with Imre, a Hungarian who has left his wife and two sons back home. Panna has adopted herself so well to social and cultural environment of America that she senses ‘light’ almost ‘free’. American experience has changed her lifeless Indian way of life and has complete her with self-confidence and self-assurance. Panna is unconventional from her limited Indian socio-cultural identity to form her new identity immigrant woman in America. She has travelled a lot—culturally, geographically and psychologically. As she claims: “Memories of Indian destitute mix with the hordes of New York steel people, and they float free, like astronauts, inside my head. I’ve made it. I’m making something of my life” (MM 29).

In a wonderfully informal manner she brings out the understandable difference between her situation and that of her mother and grandmother. Panna’s marriage is a
traditional arranged Hindu marriage “... in which a wife still doesn’t call her husband by his first name” (MM 32). She understands in America that her husband would not ever dance or hug a woman on Broadway like Imre. The whole thing in India seems insufficient and problematic in the United States, even saris are hard to have laundered. She feels “that part of my life is over...” (MM 32).

The transformation of self is not a cool job. It is frequently heroic and one has to pay in equal terms. To stay alive in America the immigrants have to cover their hearts and compromise with their intelligence of morality. This is the circumstance with charity, an oriental model and Panna’s room-mate. “She had her eyes fixed eight of nine months ago and out of gratitude sleeps with her plastic surgeon every third Wednesday” (MM 29). Panna has no doubts because she has understood that one has to take courageous choices and come out of one’s roof space in order to widen the possibilities of mind as she quickly claims, “If I hadn’t left home. I’d never have heard of the wuchang Uprising. I’ve broadened my horizons” (MM 31). But this bold transformer and an astronaut flying in the American Space, has not left her Indian sense altogether. As soon as she receives a message of her husband’s arrival she suddenly changes her cotton pants and shirt and wears sari and mangalsutra. Her flexibility is juxtaposed with the mental block of her husband who feels disgust with the ‘too friendly’ attitude towards his wife. Panna is deeply balanced down by the values of two cultures and tolerates the sufferings of balancing parts of her old life with the best of the new. As she murmurs: “Tonight I should make up to him, husband for many years away... pretend with him that nothing has changed” (MM 40). The end of the story captures both the strength of her forceful fight to make over herself and the struggle of attaining completeness when one is struggling between two cultures.
“The Tenant” is considered as one of the Best American Short Stories of 1988. Maya Sanyal is an American immigrant of Indian origin, elite and tenant. She tries to assimilate to the American social and cultural life. Maya has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and has familiarise with the writers like R. K. Narayan and Achebe. She teaches at the University of Northern Iowa. She is not a victim of child-marriage or dowry system like her grandmother and great aunt. She has ventured in America in search of a new identity, and the intellectual prosperity. She plays sitar, tambura, and has taken singing classes – a perfect Bengali Brahmin daughter.

Maya recognises her oddness in America and her dreadful isolation, but she struggles to be called a freak. When her current lover, Fred, a man without arms, refers to them, both as wounded she feel bitter about. She does not see herself as changeable as Fred, though the story undoubtedly makes it clear that she has been wounded emotionally and spiritually in order to come to terms with her new life in America. In logic, Fred’s calculation is correct, as the author indicates in the stories of this collection, it is difficult to become accustomed to life in the new world without getting marks on one’s inner self.

It is seemingly a deeper wound for the women of the third world, who fight to attain a new identity in an alien culture. Possibly this struggle results from their rapid freedom from the pledges of superstition and chauvinism that held them fast in their old, familiar cultures, freedom that seems to leave them detached; unbalanced, in the difficult, occasionally unfaithful air of this new and unfamiliar culture. The sarcasm is that this transformation of self is both painful and frightening.

When Fran chats about her own life and gossips a little about Maya’s landlord, Maya considers the vastness of her isolation and loneliness. She wishes to disclose with somebody but identifies that Fran “a utopian and feminist” (MM 100) cannot
understand her actual situation. According to her she is a courageous traveller who has made a clean disruption with her Indian past, but Maya realises that there is no such thing as a through many places: Calcutta, North Carolina, New Jersey and finally Iowa, has pampered in sexual chance meeting with many persons. She “has slept with married men, with nameless men, with men little more than boys” (MM 103). She changes her partner as the tenant has to change the house. Everywhere she is capable to have the home, that is, she is able to root herself in everyplace.

She is conscious of her misfortunes in America. She is almost seduced by an established American, Dr. Chatterjee, who has requested her for tea at home. He considers Maya - a lucky woman. Why? - “Divorced women can date . . . go to bars and disco . . . can see men, many men. But inside marriage there is so much loneliness” (MM 108). There is no ethical necessary for them in America. They are free. Maya is unconventional, a full free woman, likes immoral associations with many white Americans.

She has not ever enjoyed the sexual honey with an Indian. So she quickly answers to a doubtful private add in the Immigrant Indian weekly. She traces her male corresponding person in Ashok Mehta, a sexually unconventional professional alienated amongst romantic love and sexual promiscuity. At the end of the story, after their courtship has entered its final phase, and she has decided to go to Connecticut to be with him, she finally rejects her own accusations that her life is unattractive and headstrong, that “she has changed her citizenship, but she hasn’t broken through into the life, the vigour, the bustle of the New World” (MM 110). Finally she continues to encounter the man who will make her whole again. Thus Maya is always on the move and makes a disorder of her life to find the real sense of ‘wholeness’ and ‘fulfilment’. Separated between two cultures, Maya, the everlasting encounters, corrupts the moral
belief of both the East and the West. She remains neither an American nor an Indian. She keeps hanging in air like the mythical *Trishanku* and characterises the actual situation of a being who wedged in the net of two cultures.

In “Danny’s Girls”, Danny Sahib acquires Indian mail order inducements in a New York ghetto. The narrator is a teenager Indian origin who never visited India. “Danny’s Girls” proceeds the readers to the bottom of America, the dark world of the new immigrants. Danny / Dinesh is an Indian immigrant, a Dogra orphaned boy from Simla, a fascinator, a merchant of opportunity. Aunt Lini is a business partner of Danny. So there is an association between I – narrator and Danny. Dinesh, Indian immigrant in America, is turned Danny and becomes ‘the survivor’. From the time when teenage narrator connects with the dark world of America to survive in the new world due to forced migration. They face “hard life in America” (MM 141). His mother is a paper seller. Narrator works for Danny, who has expanded his marriage business to include mail-order brides.

Panny Patel is the cause for the change that occurs within the narrator. She is Hindu Indian and she is protected by her father and the brothers when she comes to Gujarati classes on saturday morning. He is annoyed by the approach of such Indians. Danny too becomes greedy of Rosie and treats the narrator as an outsider in his business and refers to him as a eunuch. This irritates the narrator very much, who in turn selects to ignore the limitations forced upon him. He walks into Aunt’s home without removing his shoes, approaches Rosie with love and sex, which specifies his defeat and disappointment to achieve Danny’s hope/instructions. Thus he develops a man by reacting unpleasantly to the restriction imposed on him and effectively overpowers them- “I was in the mood to break rules. For the first time I could
remember, I wasn’t afraid of Danny Sahib, I wanted to liberate Rosie and myself’’ \( (\text{MM 29}). \)

In all these stories, the characters undergo the issues of Diaspora and they are alienated and divided by two cultures. By trying to forget the past and their homeland they find hard to assimilate to the host land ethics. Immigration as transformation becomes the major theme of the eleven stories of it. Instead of alienation, assimilation is at the core of all the stories. In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Mukherjee says “My characters ‘choose’ to uproot themselves from their native countries. For my characters breaking away is part of maturing”. \( (17) \) The stories in \textit{The Middleman and Other Stories} are about people across two worlds. Mukherjee tells Angela Elam,

\begin{quote}
The people are the traditional heirs to the American Dream, but suddenly America has changed them; and people like me, who have come from non-traditional countries to America, are having to make accommodations or reject some of the old, while they graft on some of the new . . . my material is about the two way transformation that America was going through in the eighties, and more so today Americans—traditional Americans –also are having to adjust to that fact (133). \end{quote}

\textit{Jasmine} was written when Mukherjee went to the United States and hence tells a more optimistic tactic to the issue of immigration. \textit{Jasmine} \( (1989) \) is her third novel and it derives its title from a story of the same name in her \textit{The Middleman and other Stories}. She has said that she did not originally plan on expanding \textit{Jasmine}, the short story from \textit{The Middleman and the other Stories} into a novel but the story’s strong and its courageous protagonist was a personality Mukherjee falls in love with.
Alam says, subsequently she was the kind of individual her character “would have liked to have been.” (10).

*Jasmine* turns into a chief point at which the Indian and the American culture come across. In other words, the novel brilliantly depicts what it is to become American, being an immigrant from India. The narrative structure of the novel is non-linear. There are conversions in time and space and this displays that the track of the immigrants is not uniform and simple, but twisted as the epigraph of *Jasmine* taken from *Chaos: Making a New Science* by James Gleick, makes it evident, “The new geometry mirrors a universe that is rough, not rounded, scabrous, and not smooth. It is geometry of the pitted, pocked, and broken up, the twisted, tangled, and intertwined” (JM 1). Some of the feature of Chaos Theory are thematically present in the novel. Newman says that they are

More specially four contested areas . . . impact upon the novel: determinism, individualism, woman, and the relationship of local to global . . . Chaos Theory, then seems to link our everyday experiences with laws of nature by revealing subtle relationship between orderliness and randomness. In *Jasmine* determination prolepsis and chance interact in a plot, which nonetheless always offers the sense of possibility, the central reality of Chaos theory. (154)

The most important message that Mukherjee gives for immigrants in *Jasmine* is that there could be no half-measures for those who wants to settle down well in a new world. Fakrul Alam, in the article, “Migration and Settlement in North America” witnesses: “*Jasmine*, then, is a narrative devised to depict Mukherjee’s type of the successful immigrant, someone who is ready to go the whole distance in assimilating and settling down. This is how Jasmine generalizes on the secrets of the success
people like her have had in adjusting to America” (69). Thus, through *Jasmine*, Mukherjee discovers the issues which moreover lead to effective immigration or contribute to lack of expectation and despair in immigrants.

In *Jasmine*, Jasmine fascinates to strike out, but she can discriminate suitable expressions of her temper. Jasmine practices a steadier and stable transformation than Tara in *The Tiger’s Daughter*. Jasmine experiences a more enjoying positive, open inner self, which tolerates her to face new challenges, walk around new world, and to achieve her American dreams. Tara is not capable to come out of her alien status, feels nostalgic and became an important part of her new environment while Jasmine succeeds in experiencing life to the full with the enthusiasm of immigration.

*Jasmine* was translated into eighteen languages and it was selected as one of the best books of the year 1989 by the *New York Times* Book review. It narrates a story of a young widow at the age of seventeen who uproots herself from her life in India and later re-roots herself to explore her new life in America. She experiences a change from obedient Hindu wife of Prakash, when she happens to see the intellectual Taylor who calls her Jase, and then changes on to become Bud’s Jane. She makes a new world comprising of new thoughts and morals, frequently revealing her past. She attempts to establish a new cultural identity by combining new requirements, knowledge and conducts. Consequently she trapped amongst two cultures of the east and the west, the past and the present, the old and the new when Jasmine shuttles in search of a concrete identity.

P. Mallikarjuna Rao states, “*Jasmine* is the heroic story of harrowing odyssey of a poor, young and ambitious Punjabi woman who migrates from Hasnapur, a tiny village, to the United States” (272). The protagonist of the novel, Jasmine, herself is the narrator of the story. The chief importance of the novel is on the issues of diaspora
such as traditional maintenance and confrontation to change. The lives of immigrants do not have straight lines and smooth plains. For example, Jasmine takes several births namely Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, Jane, Jazzy. The unstable identity from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jane and Jase is reminiscent of the loss of one personality and the emergence of a new one but it does not have negative implications. The protagonist does not see her Indianness as an easily broken identity to be preserved against destruction, but it is seen as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated.

The narrative shifts between the past and present, between India of her past life and America of the present. The past tells the life of Jyoti’s childhood in Hasanpur, the small village in Punjab and her marriage to the young ambitious city man named Prakash, who always thrashed traditions. Her husband had given her a new identity and the new name ‘Jasmine’ because she was small, sweet and heady and would quicken the whole world with her fragrance. The present tells her life in Florida, New York, Iowa and finally towards California.

An astrologer predicts Jasmine’s widowhood and exile at the age of seven but she refuses to succumb to the fate of becoming a widow. She takes several steps to revolt against her fate and so she draws several paths for her life. She enquires to the astrologer regarding the prediction of her ‘widowhood and exile’ in the hardest terms: “You’re a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds!” (JM 3). She falls down and gets a wound when she tries to escape from that astrologer which leaves an everlasting star shaped scar on her forehead.

Jasmine considers her scar on the forehead as an advantage and says about it as ‘it’s my third eye” (JM 5). She says it helps her to peer into visible worlds and she visualises herself to be a sage. In an interview with Steinburg, Mukherjee says, the star shaped scar on her forehead, the third eye, which in “India is a blemish that
reduces her bridal value” (34). Jasmine becomes angry and falls into the river to clean herself, but suddenly her fingers worn out the soft waterlogged dead body of a small dog, rotten body, and the unpleasant smell leaking out of it that stays on her body.

Jasmine led her early life in a village with a poor financial status in a small hut. Even though she does not have the facilities such as electricity, television, water supplies, hand pump and well, she was send to school for getting education where the Masterji, her teacher, gives a special care and coaching to her. On seeing the talents of Jasmine, her teacher considers her as a “lotus blooming in Cow dung” (JM 46) and takes care “. . . not to burn the flower with the dung” (JM 50). Jasmine, a beautiful and intelligent, is imprisoned in the Indian traditional patriarchal culture but blooms in America as Jase and Jane. Her cousin once says “. . . big city men prefer us village girls because we are not brought up to be caring and have no minds of our own. Village girls are like cattle, whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (JM 46). Her excellent skill in English composition made her brothers, Aravind-Prar and Hari-Prar, proud. She supports them in translating the instruction manual and writing job applications. She is a “lotus” (JM 48) for her ‘Pitaji’. The neighbourhood women too likes to give their bills to her for a clear check because Jasmine is proficient in both in English as well as maths but she finds it hard to understand novels written by Shane, Alice in Wonderland, and Jane Eyre.

After finishing her high school education at the age of thirteen, Jasmine’s grandmother has found her a bride groom named Ludhiana. He is a widower who has three children and wants a dutiful wife to take care of those children. Masterji tries to save the life of Jasmine from that bride groom so he motivates her father to send her for secondary school education. Pitaji accepts his opinion and when he asks her aim
and she tells her aim “I want to be a doctor” (JM 51). On hearing that her father calls her mad, blames her mother for everything and thinks it is Kali Yuga, so that women are changes, talks and thinks in this way. Jyoti is the witness of her father’s nostalgia, Lahore memories, lack of wealth and relatives due to partition Diaspora. So Jasmine chooses to study and make something of her life.

Jasmine is brought up in a village where women not even have facilities such as latrines. It is her intelligent, modernist outlook, ability to change herself and others fine qualities in her made to adjust with the modern life style and cultures. She has intelligent ideas and supports the village women. She feels herself powerful and once brave, clever Jyoti smashes the skull of a dog which tries to attack the village women during their morning latrine hours. During her school life, she has seen the gang of Khalasa Lions who put their demand for a separate nation- Khalistan. Actually they are Pakistan connected smugglers of liquor and guns.

She was taken from the school suddenly because of the sudden death of her father. Her brothers too do not continue their Jyoti’s technical school in Jullundhar because they are in the situation to look after the widowed grandmother, mother and an unmarried sister and the other women in the family. Here the astrologer’s predicated starts to activate but she fails to understand her fate. One day Jasmine happens to meet the Khalsa lion Sukhwinder with his visit to her home. Sukhwinder considers Khalistan as their own sovereign state. He wants Kalistans by banishing Hindus. He compels the Hindus to convert as Sikh or to leave the state or be killed. Sukhwinder calls all Hindu women inferior, men-rapists and also considers ‘sari’ as a sign of prostitute, so “all Hindus are bent on genocide of the sikh nation” he said (JM 66). Prakash who is a secular, intellectual, forward-thinking and stable in his opinions,
who thinks, “India is for everyone” (JM 66) also came along with them. His ideas were contrasted with the ideas of Sukhi so they look at Prakash as a danger.

On hearing the energetic, powerful, intelligent and optimistic dialogues of Prakash, Jyoti “fell in love with that voice . . . to marry the man” (JM 66). She falls in love with him before ‘first sight’. Prakash, a young city man from Amritsar, a respectable student, about to graduate and is going to migrate to the United States to become part of that nation. During the childhood, Jasmine decided that she would not marry the man who does not speak English and she is overjoyed by knowing that Prakash communicates in first class English. Prakash is against the dowry system and that firm optimistic views and decision too impresses her a lot. Her brothers arrange their meeting and he too wishes to marry her without any kind of dowry. After two weeks, Jyoti married Prakash, with “no dowry, no guests, and registry office wedding in a town” (JM 75).

Marriage without dowry and guests are not Indian traditions and so her friend Vimala considers this kind of act as sinful and thinks “. . . once you let one tradition go, all other traditions crumble” (JM 75). It happens with Jyoti and her husband, Prakash has disorganised some traditions of Indian society. He declare- “There’s no room in modern India for feudalism”. Even though Jyoti learns independence and self-confidence from him, she “felt suspended between worlds” (JM 76). Prakash is very modern and he expects Jyoti to call him by his name but she felt very hard to call by his name, because she is rooted by the Indian tradition. She thinks her husband is Professor Higgins from *Pygmalion*. He wants to break down Jyoti from Hasnapur for transformation of his wife in a “new kind of city woman” (JM 77) so Prakash renames ‘Jyoti’ as ‘Jasmine’ which means “small and sweet and heady” (JM 77) but she is caught between “Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttle between identities” (JM 77).
Prakash waits and longs for his migration to the United States and meanwhile he works as repairman and a book-keeper for Jagtiani and also works as a tutor for a boy of thirteen. Jasmine also works secretly as a detergent agent and gives him money in a needy situation so he calls her “secretive little monkey” (JM 82). Prakash has planned his family life as a mature, adjusting and modern and he doesn’t do anything without her agreement. He does not want to make Jasmine to suffer at the mere age so he does not want her to become as a mother. In the meantime, temporally a benefactor named Prof. Devinder Vadhera invites him to “celebrate America . . . travel” (JM 83). He is obsessed with passing exams, making something more of his life than fate intended. She is reminded of the astrologer and decides to keep away from it by migrating to the United States.

Jasmine wants to escape from the fate but the fate follows her in the name of the Khalsa Lion’s movement which killed Jasmine’s Masterji. They reach Hasnapur and Jullundhar to blow up shops and buses. Prakash secures admission in IIT Florida, Tampa. On the evening before Prakash and Jasmine’s departure to the United States, they both went for shopping and there Prakash is murdered in a terrorist bombing. They also planned to kill Jasmine for her refusal of the old-fashioned customs. She wears the modern Salwar kameez according to Prakash’s wish and refuses to wear traditional sari. This transformation in her increases the anger of Sukhwinder, a passionate friend of her brothers and a Khalistan activist, who tries and plans to kill her. He plants a bomb at the store where Jasmine shops with her husband. Even though she notices Sukhwinder’s presence outside the shop and the forthcoming danger, the bomb explodes before they can seek a protection and kills Prakash but Jasmine survives.
All her dreams shatters and the death of her husband leaves her heartbroken. Jasmine at the age of seventeen is widowed as the astrologer had foretold. Prakash had applied for admission to the Florida International technology before his death. Jasmine remembers Prakash’s wishes, dreams, vision and says herself- “Do not crawl back to Hasnapur and feudalism. That Jyoti is dead” (JM 96). She is sure that “Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash” (JM 97). To complete her responsibility and honour she travels to the United States. Her brother, Hari-Prar, helps her to complete her mission by arranging illegal documents to migrate. By this kind of migration, the other half of the prediction of the astrologer ‘exile’ also came true. She packed the suit of Prakash and decides to commit Sati by burning herself along with her husband’s suit at the location where he planned to get the education. On the other hand, her fate plays in the life of Jasmine and it gives so many issues and experience regarding diaspora.

Jasmine migrates to America as an illegal immigrant and a voluntary Diaspora via middle East Sudan, Germany, Amsterdam- Europe with a Sandalwood Ganapathi, “a god . . . to uproot anything in my path” (JM 102). She travels by plane and reaches Amsterdam and starts recognising her uprooted identity and her marginal position in the big airports lounges. Most of the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the diasporic issues, where characters try to shape their identity. Likewise in Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* also, Jasmine leaves for America not knowing what future holds for her. She says:

> We are the outcasts 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 surely, barely wakened customs guards await their bribe.
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. (JM 101)

Jasmine’s life is a continuous process of immigration from one place to another, from one identity to the next. Jasmine survives her lifetime in the industrial space shared to diasporic communities, a space characterized by continuous movement and ambiguity, in which nothing was rooted anymore. An American becomes as migratory as Jasmine herself, for while she once idealized America as the paradigm of unity and cohesion, she soon finds that each new city presents her with another respects of American life, just as each new location results in the creation of another identity for her. Neither America nor Jasmine can ever be singular or whole, for they exist, multiply, with each state on the map representing the possibility of a new self. Mukherjee is recognizing that the relationship between environment and the diasporic figure are parallel and at the same time inextricably linked. As mentioned before, Jasmine’s surroundings are luminal they are characterized by an ever-changing uncertainty just as jasmine herself is. Jasmine articulates this sense of impermanence when she describes what she believes to be the diasporic experience.

She tries to reach in body but not in spirit. She is alienated by the hesitations of her life in an unknown country:

We are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in air lounges; you watch us unwrapping the last of our native foods, unrolling our prayer rugs, reading our holy books, taking out for the hundredth lime an aerogram promising a job or space to sleep, a newspaper in our language, a photo of happier times, a pass port, a visa, laissez-passer . . . . What country? What continent? We pass
through wars, through plagues. I am hungry for news, but the discarded papers are in characters or languages I cannot read. The zig zag route is straightest. (JM 101)

Jasmine’s pathway to America is considered as harrowing experience. The transformation of identity from dutiful obedient widow into self-confident, illegal, and unique American woman is in full swing. The disappointment opinion of the Florida marshes that she gets on her first admittance into America, “Eden’s waste: plastic bottles, floating oranges, boards, sodden boxes, white and green plastic sacks tied shut but picked open by birds and pulled apart by crabs” (JM 107) and seems to be a suitable background to the bad luck awaiting her. As an illegal immigrant she wants to await a lot to suffer.

On the first night in America itself she was raped by Captain half-face. The most important issue of diasporic person is transformation of identity. It starts from this moment in the life of Jasmine. Before the rape Jasmine is remained of the Hindu belief, included by her mother, “... we are all put on this earth for a purpose ... all acts are connected. For every monster there is a hero. For every hero, a monster” (JM 114) . She murders the captain who raped her. In the alien land, she undergoes a transformation on murdering the Captain.

No one to call to, no one to disturb us. Just me and the man who raped me, the man I had murdered. The room looked like a slaughterhouse. Blood had congealed on my hands, my chin, and my breasts. What a monstrous thing, what an infinitesimal thing, is the taking of a human life; for the second time in three months, I was in a room with a slain man, my body bloodied. I was walking death. Death incarnate. (JM 119)
Jasmine decides to kill herself because of the disgraceful event but “it was the murkiness of the mirror and sudden sense of mission that stopped me . . . I didn’t feel the passionate embrace of Lord Yama that could turn a kerosene flame into a lover’s caress” (JM 117-118). Her plans on a suicide was changed when the shower appears to wake Jasmine up from her sense of suicidal drift. She understands: “I could not let my personal dishonour disrupt my mission” (JM 118). She kills the demon and for some moment remains worried and soon she overcomes from that suicide thought. She took the identity of Goddess Kali to take revenge on her rapist and murders him. Her transformation into an American immigrant is shown in her adaptability of American culture. In killing half face, writes Samir Dayal, “she experiences an epistemic violence that is also a life-affirming transformation” (66). Wickramagage terms this murder “the enabling act that allows her to make the required cultural switch” (171). Preoccupied with distressing 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. Half-Face was from an underworld of evil. 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. I faced death twice before, and cheated it”. (JM 116)

Jasmine starts a fresh journey after this violent encounter with this ugly world. “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, travelling light” (JM 121). Earlier Jasmine plans to undergo Sati because according to the Hindu tradition after the death of husband, the wife too should be burnt along with him to serve him in the place where he goes but after the violent encounter, she has burned all the suit of
Prakash in front of a motel with the help of trash bins and decides not to commit ‘sati’ because of the transformation which takes place within herself.

Jasmine tries to restructure the purpose of her visit to America and she makes it as the foundation for the development of her potential. It is realized by the force of her strong will which surfaces in opposing moments and helps to reconstruct her mission with a single-minded enthusiasm which urges her later success. She meets Lillian Gorden, a kind lady, in nearly dead out of shock, hunger and weariness. She works for her and pities her situation. She also teaches her to talk, walk and dress like Americans and she picks it up at the earliest to avoid the harms and pains of the Third World expatriate of the first generation. Lillian’s generosity and her guidance “let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you” (JM 131) help her recover physically and mentally. Lillian encourages her: “Now remember, if you walk American and talk American, they’ll think you were born here. Most Americans can’t imagine anything else” (JM 134-135). Lillian Gorden gives Jasmine a more Americanised new name ‘Jazz’ as a symbol of her entry into and acceptance of American culture which she welcomes delightedly. “I took a turn between the kitchen and bath. I checked myself in the mirror, shocked at the transformation. Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords and running shoes. I couldn’t tell if with the Hasnapuri sidle I’d also abandoned Hasnapuri modesty” (JM 133).

To know and adopt the difference in each country’s culture is very important for a diasporic person. Lillian Gorden taught everything to Jasmine and after intensive working out in how to get through revolving doors, going up and down escalators and cooking hamburgers and roots, Jazzy gets ready to move on to New York and face the Port Authority officials to get a green card and it wins in getting a forged green card, her freedom.
She goes to New York with that forged green card and she expects a lot in that alien land but she is shocked by the sight of beggars. “I felt I’d come to America too late, I felt cheated. I had Lillians parting gift of one hundred dollars, of which I’d already spent twenty on food, and a bag of Florida oranges and grapefruit as a house present for Professorji” (JM 139). Once the beggars finds that she has nothing to give they shouted, “You fucking foreign bitch” (JM 139). The taxi driver in New York is a migrant doctor from Kabul, who lives like dog because they have taken everything from him. This upsets her a lot and on the streets of New York Jasmine sees more greed and more people like herself, “New York was an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens” (JM 140).

Jasmine moves into a traditional Indian family of Prakash’s Professor, Mr. Devinder Vadhera. “The family consisted of his aged parents and his recent bride, Nirmala, a girl of nineteen fresh from a village in the Patiala district. The marriage has been arranged about a year before” (JM 161). She finds herself quiet by the inactivity of this home for it is totally isolated from everything American. She tries her level best to forget all the Indian thought and her past but everything in that Professor is different to her mind set up and everything remembers her past Indian thoughts. He tries to protect the Indian ethnicity and believes the austerities of widowhood too. The Professor and his family follows and holds on everything Indian. “They let nothing go lest everything be lost” (JM 162). This prohibited them to assimilate and accept to the new alien culture. Jasmine does not feel comfortable to live with the Professor and his family members as she is a widow and wants to escape from that widowhood. So she decides to leave their family and to live at her own thoughts and freedom. As an immigrant she wants to forget the past and tries to lead a
new life in the unknown alien land. As she wants to lead such a life she tries to adopt the culture of the new land.

Soon Jasmine became an American in an apartment on Claremont Avenue across the street from a Barnard College dormitory and finds a work at Manhattan as a salaried caretaker. She works as a caretaker for the adopted girl child of Taylor and Wylie Hayes, a glamorous a liberated couple, called Duff. Soon Jasmine’s identity has been changed in her alien land. She becomes Jase from Jazzy. She learns a lot about the advantages of democracy from Taylor, who gives Jasmine a new name Jase, and he becomes Jase’s American instructor. As a diasporic woman, Jasmine does not have a constant identity. As an immigrant, her identity keeps on changing and she transforms as a sophisticated American woman. Taylor taught her how to return the unwanted goods arrives by mail and he instructs Jase not to preoccupy with those unwanted goods. He explains her by writing ‘return to the sender’ with thick pen, “That's all you need to do, he explained. If something gets too frightening, just pull down an imaginary shade that says ‘Return on it’ and you can make it go away” (JM 186). Taylor is giving her a demonstration on how to use America to make it the home you like: “You can push away the scary feelings of not . . . helplessness into belonging and empowerment”. (JM 185).

Jasmine learns a lot from Taylor and these lessons swift essential changes in Jasmine. It is here, she says: “I bloomed from a different alien . . . into adventurous Jase” (JM 186). Pushpa N. Parekh thinks that Jase’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” (111).
In the new surrounding marked by personal warmth, Jasmine becomes more Americanized, more confident of her proficiency in English. Jasmine falls in love with the world of Taylor and wants to become a part of it,

He smiled his crooked-toothed smile, and I began to fall in love. I mean, 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, even when she didn’t understand it. It seemed entirely American. I was curious about his life, not repulsed. I wanted to know the way such a man lives in this country. I wanted to watch, be a part of it. (JM 179)

Jasmine gets accommodated into the private life of Taylor because Wylie falls out of love with him and falls in love with Stuart Eschelman, an economist. Wylie follows her “chance at real happiness” (JM 181), giving the role of caretaker to Jasmine in Taylor’s household. Jasmine falls in love with Taylor and she desires to change herself in accordance with Taylor’s exception:

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 they thought: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer, not widowed, raped, destitute, and fearful. (JM 171)

She falls into the pattern in a moralistic fashion, replacing in his bed the wife who left. This shows her Americanization and assimilation of that culture. In India, this relation is considered as an illicit relationship. Taylor calls her Jase, giving her a new identity: “Taylor didn’t want to change me. He didn’t want to scour and sanitize
the foreignness. My being different . . . didn’t scare him. I changes because I wanted to” (JM 185).

Racial indifference is also an important issue of a Diaspora. Jasmine’s race is now known as belonging to the South Asian Community, as opposed to Half-Face racist generation. Even though she advances the hard work made by Taylor’s culturally aware friends who try to involve her on a level of racial specificity, Jasmine however surprises as to the nature of her role as a South Asian Woman. Taylor’s friends use Jasmine, falling prey to the orientalist habit of assuming knowledge of the other and expecting a certain details from her because of her South Asian background. Jasmine is expected to know languages associated with South Asia, irrespective of whether it is in fact her specific dialect. Thus, while Jasmine is correctly seeming as South Asian, she is still discriminated against, but on a much indirect level. Taylor’s friends are interested in her because she is South Asian, aimed at what she can aid them with and for what she represents is an entire set of cultures and nations. In unambiguous dissimilarity to half-face grouping of all people of colour into one category, Jasmine’s specific racial difference is known and included in this community of people, but her racial identity is subject to the prejudice of incorrect distinctions instead of uncultured extensive statement.

Jasmine’s perception of her race transforms according to the way in which people view her.

There were other day mummies in the building. We were a sorority that met in the laundry room and in the park. Two of them I got to know quite well, Letitia from Trinidad, and Jamaica from Barbados. Letitia was a grumbler and Jamaica was a snob. Lettie would say of her boss, the interior decorator who’d travelled all the way to Paraguay to
adopt a baby, “What she think? Slavery making a big comeback?
Jassie girl . . . “said in her haughty British voice, “Do I look like
someone who guzzles vodka or steals pork chops”. (JM 178)

In this specific situation class politics put forth a great deal of influence upon
awareness of Jasmine’s race. Even though Taylor’s friends view Jasmine as a South
Asian woman and asks her to help them translate academic documents and paintings,
the other women caregivers in the building assume that since she is in the position of
a day mummy, she must also belong to their native country. Occupation becomes the
marker of race, white skin colour and society are suddenly of secondary importance.

Taylor and Duff are like a family members to Jasmine and she lives happily in
the company of them. She gets a greatest moments of stay in America. Taylor
becomes Jase’s city lover who turns Jasmine’s colonial subalternity into American
subject hood through renaming and educating her. She likes her role as a day-mummy
and prays that it should never end. She led a happy and peaceful life there and she is
observed into the American world fail to recall all about her strange mission and now
she will no longer be troubled by rootlessness. “I had landed and was getting rooted”
(JM 178). Fascinating the alien culture somewhat greedily, Jasmine turn out to be a
self-confident individual.

The transformation of Jasmine is to a certain extent fast but she is not capable
to slow down the step as she is “unwilling to abandon the ride” (JM 139) she is on.
She is not compelled by anyone to change her but it is she who wants to change
herself because she senses it is cowardly to “bunker oneself inside nostalgia” (JM
185). Through the help of soothing touch of people like Lillian Gorden, Kate and
Taylor, who consider her as an intellectual, sophisticated, genuine, kind and caring
person, Jasmine blooms from being different alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase who lives only for the present.

Jasmine is involuntary to flee from Taylor and Duff with the reappearance of Sukhwinder Singh, even though her wish that her job as Duff’s caregiver and her love for Taylor would last forever. Jasmine is an illegal immigrant and it is considered as her weakness and it brought her again to the forefront when Taylor recommends that she stays in New York and fight Sukhwinder: “Don’t you see that is impossible? I’m illegal here, he knows that I can’t come out and challenge him. I’m very exposed, I’m alone all day, I’m out in the park.” I remembered Wylie’s Stuart having observed me for months, and suddenly I felt filthy, having been observed, tracked, by Sukhwinder (JM 168). Jase does not want to put Taylor and Duff in any danger so she decides to leave New York and to go to Iowa. Her escape is not a sign of her cowardice, rather, it is ‘life-affirming’.

Jasmine escapes to Iowa just contrary to the advice of Taylor. Another opportunity after bidding impermanent farewell to Taylor knocks at in the form of Mother Ripplemeyer. She is a Lutheran of German extraction and she introduces her son, Bud Ripplemeyer and helps her in getting job in her son’s bank. Subsequently just six months, Jasmine becomes the live - in - companion of Bud Ripplemeyer. He rechristens her as ‘Jane’ and starts a new life with her after divorcing his wife Karin. Bud and Jane adopt Du, a Vietnamese Refugee, as Bud wants to make up for his fifty years of selfishness. The transformation of Bud Ripplemeyer confirms Mukherjee’s belief that diaspora is a two – way transformation. If the immigrants are under transformation in America, they in turn, too are changing and transforming America.

Bud falls a victim to one Harlan Kroener, a farmer, who shoots him and makes him a crippled man. This act of violence also shows that nobody is safe in
violence torn America. Bud is permanently confined to the wheel chair and once Bud becomes crippled, she does not desert him, but patiently aids him and also carries his child in her womb. She offers emotional supports to Bud who feels anxious after being handicapped. Jasmine put an end to her personal requirements completely to show of any kind role Bud demands of her. Lal says, she also “insisted upon sexual intimacy so that the maimed lover, Bud may feel assured of his manhood” (55). Bud is so helplessly in love with her and also in need have on her that he often says “you brought me back from the dead” (JM 200). Bud courts Jasmine because she is very personification of Eastern mystery: “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” (JM 200).

Finally, she gives up thinking as Jane to transform into a new role, the identity which she desires. It is America, the land of golden opportunities where every person can melt into a new form. Her food, clothes, diplomacy- all are the American in the process of re-rooting in the new soil. She carries Bud’s baby without marriage and it is a vital token of her successful relocation. Being Indian or American is not simply a matter of geographical location of one’s physical existence. It is largely a matter of one’s attitude and values.

Jasmine attempts to forget her past but often she recollects her life in India. Usually she shares her past stories about India with Mother Ripplemeyer, Bud’s mother. She says that the life of the farmers in India and Iowa are looking alike. She also expresses her thought regarding the water famines in Hasnapur, and how the village women fought for a bucketful of muddy water. Jasmine has the habit of the storing water in plastic bottles, containers bowls, and so on even after reaching Iowa: “I could tell her about water famines in Hasnapur, how at the dried-out docile women
turned savage for the last muddy bucketful. Even here I store in orange-juice jars, plastic milk bottles, tumblers, mixing bowls, any container I can find” (JM 16). Mother Ripplemeyer also tells Jasmine about her hard times in the United States:

She tells me her Depression stories. In the beginning, I thought we could trade some world-class poverty stories, but mine make her uncomfortable. Not that she’s hostile. It’s like looking at the name in my passport and seeing “Jyo-” at the beginning and deciding that her mouth was not destined to make those sounds. She can’t begin to picture a village in Punjab. She doesn’t mind my stories about in New York and Florida because she’s been to Florida many times and seen enough pictures of New York. I have to be careful about those stories. I have to be careful about nearly everything I say. If I talk about India, I talk about my parents (JM 16).

Even though Mother Ripplemeyer hears the past life of Jasmine she cannot understand the clear picture of her life in Hasnapur. When comparing to Karin, Bud’s ex-wife, Mother Ripplemeyer loves and likes Jasmine a lot because of her care and affection towards her even in her old age. She is very much family oriented and this is a basic in the Indian society. In India they gives importance to families, relations and constructions and most of the Indians care for each other in their family. Though she tries to come out of Indian life these feelings made her an Indian. As Stanley M. Stephen comments on the multi-faceted perspectives of Jasmine and the role she has performed thus:

Jasmine plays the role of an exotic beauty, an illegal documented, a domestic, an au pair, a lover, a caregiver, a caretaker, life giver, comforter, counsellor, healer and resurrector in the American society.
As an assimilated immigrant she gains power to direct people’s lives, heals wounds (both physical and metaphorical) relocate dislocated families, bridge the gap in broken homes and rejuvenate lives. (58)

Jasmine’s shows her love and care for people in need in the alien land. Though she is assimilated into the alien culture, she remembers her Indianness which is confirmed through her care towards Bud even after he becomes crippled, and love for Mother Ripplemeyer. Jasmine again shutters between two cultures and their values.

Due to the depressed situation of Bud she is drawn in the direction of him. Though their relationship is based on mutual need, she renders wifely devotion compelled by her inherited morality. In the process of her transformation, Jane was seized by a longing to belong. Bud decides to adopt a Vietnamese child named Du. Bud already has two married sons. The new comer is Du, a survivor from a refugee camp.

Du is a Ripplemeyer. He was Du Thien. He was fourteen when we got him . . . he does well, though he’s sometimes contemptuous. He barely spoke English when he arrived; now he’s fluent, but with permanent accent . . . . It was January when Du arrived at Des Moines from Honolulu with his agency escort. He was wearing an Aloha, Y’all T-shirt and a blue-jean jacket. (JM 14)

His parents and his brothers have been killed. One sister, staying in another camp, used to come and helped him survive. His new mother, Jasmine reflects: “In the America Du knows, mothers are younger than sisters, mothers are illegal aliens, murderers, rape victims, in Du’s America, parents are unmarried, fathers are invalids, shot in the back on the eve of Christmas Eve” (JM 224). She closely identifies herself
with Bud’s adopted son, Du, a Vietnamese because he was an immigrant like herself. Both had seen death closely:

I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness. A caregiver’s life is a good life, a worthy life. What am I to do? . . . The smell of single flesh is always with me. Du and I have seen death up close. We’ve stowed way on boats like Half-Face’s, we’ve hurtled through time tunnels. We’ve seen worst and survived. Like creatures in fairy tales, we’ve shrunk, we’ve swollen and we’ve swallowed the cosmos whole. (JM 240)

Jasmine as well as Du tries to forget the bad dream of their early lives and they are in a hurry to become an American. It was easy to assimilate in America. They had just to start letting go. “Let go just one thing like not wearing our normal cloths, or a turban or not wearing the tikka on the forehead- the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole” (JM 29). After their immigration they try to assimilate but both Jasmine and Du are unable to assimilate fully to settle down. Du, after knowing that his sister is alive, decides to go to unsecured Los Angles by leaving the comfortable and security given by Bud. He leaves with a Vietnamese man, speaking Vietnamese with him. “My transformation has been genetic, Du’s was hyphenated”, considers Jasmine (JM 222). Du leaves saying: “You gave me a new life. I’ll never forget you” (JM 223).

After a long gap, Taylor and Duff saw Jasmine at Iowa and they pleads her to come along with them to the California frontier, which is in farther west. Jasmine too decides to go along with them but she is in a conflicting mind because of the womb of Bud in her stomach. She is in dilemma and her first reaction to them “I can’t leave. How can I?” (JM 238) and her unspoken words are: “ I want to do the right thing. I don’t mean to be a terrible person.” (JM 239). That means, that she considers leaving
and going away with Taylor as morally wrong, as not the right thing. This old-world dutifulness is traditionally Indian and is rejected in favour of a life of adventure and happiness promised by America. Finally she cuts her switches her loyalty to Taylor easily. She invites Karin, Bud’s ex-wife to take care of Bud and Taylor tells her what to do with unwanted packages, and so she writes a confident return with thick marker pen to Bud Ripplemeyer.

Nothing is rooted for Jasmine and everything is in motion. She again moves westward with Taylor, her former lover, in search of an adventure future in California. Thus Jasmine experiences a sequence of transformation, as she fights to leave her old self behind and find a new, an American identity. She wants to identify herself as an American and no longer an immigrant. Sushma Tandon opinions: “despite her difficulties, Jasmine survives with grace, holding on her capacity to make a new life for herself” (140).

Jasmine does not feel any guilt for leaving Bud because according to the American ethos they can leave a person and go off with another person if they want. As she tries to adopt the American culture so she does not find nothing wrong in it. “It is not guilt that I feel, its feel. I realise I have already stopped thinking myself as Jane” (JM 240). Bud wants to marry. Though she is carrying his baby she is not interested to marry him because she has only affection for him, not love. In retorting to Bud’s ex-wife, Karin’s accusatory remark that she was leaving Bud, Jasmine says, “I am not leaving Bud . . . I’m going somewhere” (JM 240). In America, she knows nothing lasts forever, and decides to move out to seek a life of happiness. Jasmine is on the move, casting off old lives easily as a snake sheds its skin. Sushma Tandon says: “We find Jasmine growing very confident in her powers to shape a new identity. Her decision to leave crippled Bud, walking with Taylor, shows her asserting herself,
not merely choosing between Bud and Taylor; instead she is trying to reposition her stars” (143). She waits for her real love which she finds when Taylor comes to her. As Jaiwanti Dimri has pointed out, “A woman on way to liberation trying to be free from inhabitations is rarely seen in Indo-Anglian Literature” (75). In illustrating her theme realistically, Mukherjee shows that liberation has a comfortable that may not be to everyone’s liking.

The Americanness in her has prepared her to take Taylor’s proposal to go to California and to take a new journey parting Bud. As she knows that in America nothing lasts forever. She sees many death and worst experiences in her life so many times. She suffers and survives so she leaves Bud and selects a happy life with Taylor. As Sumita Roy points out, “Jasmine’s search for self-recognition takes her in social and spiritual directions . . . till she arrives at a time when she can view the future’ greedy with wants and reckless from hope” (183).

Ethnically Jasmine is relocated in the United States by applying American ways of life (sexual life with Taylor and Bud). She doesn’t think of her returning to original homeland- India. It is not the myth of Return but relocation in America itself. So by leaving Gorden, Vadheras and Taylor she locates in Iowa Baden with Bud and again with Taylor, heading to westward- California. It is her development in relocation. Jasmine’s frequent relocation is successful in America. She knows “. . . What I don’t want become? (JM 42) that means she knows exactly what she wants. She is neither nostalgic nor homesick like her father who “lived in a bunker” (JM 42) of Lahore memories, and her mother who “couldn’t forget the partition Riots” (JM 41). She deliberately forgets the past. She knows that “for me (her), experience must be forgotten, or else it will kill” (JM 33) and “I believe in incarnation” (JM 125).
She acknowledges “I became American” (JM 184). She is happy with Taylor and she changes as he wants and likes. She knows that “To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bullet proof vest, was to be a coward” (JM 185) and “even memories are a sign of disloyalty” (JM 231). Jasmine declares that she scarcely sends or receives letters. She is loyal to the new homeland both to Taylor and Bud, but her past is hurtling in the form of Sukhi, the murderer of Prakash who tracks her in New York. This makes her to relocate in Iowa. Even though the Third world people tries to forget their past they will remember them and they confronts the issues of diaspora such as alienation, rootlessness etc.

Jasmine takes the life as it comes after entering into the alien land and survives very considerably in the world of reality. As a diasporic woman, she has so many identities and she accepts each and every new role and becomes comfort in it. It is basically as a widowed wife that Jasmine journeys to the United States and turn out to be a child-bearing wife to Bud. It is the American life force that makes Jasmine move on from place to place and from person to person. In Jasmine, Mukherjee permits her Indian protagonist to work together freely with American culture so that she not only takes but gives as well and by giving she provides a new perception to the land she live in. Jasmine escapes the Indian ghetto in colouring and adopts herself to the patters of dominant American culture but it does not mean that she throws her race, her religion, her beliefs etc. No doubt the liberated Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane, who make a life time for every name, look like an opportunity for every whole-hearted immigrant. Thus caught between the two cultures of the east and west, past and present, old and new, Jasmine constantly shuttles in search of a concrete identity.

Jasmine is considered as Mukherjee’s perfect model of an immigrant. Mukherjee herself has experiences the immigrant life. An immigrant in her
conception transforms his or her identity as many times as requires in order to reach the ideal. Obviously, an immigrant’s ideal is to get assimilated into the mainstream culture. So an immigrant’s progression is from the fringes of the dominant culture to the centre. The movement from being an ‘expatriate’ to becoming an ‘immigrant’ is not easy. ‘Immigrant’ experience entails pain. It means shedding of one’s old identities and emotional hangovers. The ultimate purpose of an ‘immigrant’ is ‘to belong’ in an immigrant locale. The other possibility for anyone who chooses to live in another country is the life of an ‘expatriate’. An ‘expatriate’ keeps himself aloof and distances himself from the dominant culture only to bunker into nostalgia for a lost homeland. But the life of Jyoti-Jasmine-Jazzy-Jase-Jane is a fictional rendering of an ‘immigrant’.

Mukherjee depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and an optimistic journey. Her transformation from Jyoti to Jasmine, Jasmine to Jazzy, Jazzy to Jase, and Jase to Jane is a process in which she survives hideous times that involve rapes, murders, terrifying challenges and unimaginable crisis. She creates a new world consisting a new desires, skills and habits. This transition is defined not only in the changes in her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men.

In India, as Jyoti, she is against the background of the inflexible and male-dominated Indian society. Jyoti, which means light, is born in a gender-biased society. In America, her self-awareness is reflected with Bud, Taylor and Du. After her husband’s death, Jasmine tries to establish a new cultural identity and in exile, she essays to cultivate new habits and expressions of life. The significance of an immigrant is decided by the approval of the host land. It makes her easy to relocate there but she has paid the price—given up the status that she is never be able to achieve in the new world. Indian Jyoti/Jasmine turns American immigrant. In this process,
sufferings are lessons for her. She must negotiate a series of selves to claim her American identity.

Identity is an important issue of an immigrant. The immigrants tries to get a constant identity in the alien land. The indicator of identity is ‘name’ which shows- gender, religion, nation- the given identities. Immigration talks about the act of adopting new citizenship, of going the full nine yards of transformation. Transformation affects both the individual and the national-cultural identity. The second generation diaspora Jasmine is capable of transforming out of her parents’ experience of partition diaspora, from Lahore to Hasnapur, but the country was same for them. Change in Jasmine’s identity, the fluid identity, is marked by renaming the narrator-protagonist Jasmine. In an interview with Rodriguez, Mukherjee says” . . . name as reincarnations to name yourselves to say I’m going to be this person for the time being . . . reinvention, refashioning of the self . . .” (69). In Jasmine, the renaming occurs during her transformation into a person newly born. Her Indian identity is drawn with the names- Jyoti (light) and Jasmine (a flower), given by parents and husband, the identity providers of Indian women. These names are the markers of ‘given identity’, the identity presents, and because she is born in India, Hasnapur, Punjab, and nation- states are built on the basis of religion. India is called the nation of Hindus, Jyoti is a Hindu, so she is Indian but she is renamed as Jasmine. It is a Muslim name, represents India, the country of multi-religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism.

In her Indian education, multi-headed traitors who were also extra-terrestrial oceans and anthromorphic gods, stands for amazing transformation of the literal. Jasmine also recollects her grandma’s stories of Vishnu, the preserver “containing our world inside his potbellied stomach” (JM 224) and she is bearing the same fertile
order within. The body is refer to as “a whole new Universe” (JM 235), changing inside Jasmine.

Mukherjee has beautifully used an additional significant feature of Hindu values that the insight of changing identities which lies in fact of Hindu religious belief of re-embodiment. It can also be taken as a thought-provoking way of linking civilisation with the notion of rejoicing new womanhood, one of the leading features found in Mukherjee’s works. In an interview to Alison Crab, she says:

I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspective I have about a single character’s life is different from that of an American writer who believes that he only has life. As a Hindu I believe in the existence of alternate realities, and this belief makes itself evident in my fiction” (27)

In a one more interview with Connell, she once more marks it strong that: “I always found it hard to cope with what are the basic tents of Hinduism. But yes, if you asked me casually as a believing Hindu, my way of dealing with it has been to say, like in my novel *Jasmine*, we are reinventing ourselves a million times” (41). His idea of birth and rebirth in one’s life has been continuously used by Mukherjee in *Jasmine*. *Jasmine* says, “I had been reborn” (JM 103). Actually it means the over-howling of her character subsequently going through different experiences in life and where in its deeper logic it means the transformation of the soul when one is reborn. Besides this, the concept of the self-mingling with the Absoluter of Hindu philosophy has been highlighted in *Jasmine*. Using Saint Kabir’s well-known couplet, of water mingling with water, Mukherjee has used the metaphor of air to show absolute merging with new culture. *Jasmine* admits, “I took in everything” (JM 179). Apart from her Indian roots it also shows her true immigrant nature.
Jasmine’s shifting identities is vindicated from this viewpoint, she is a witness to the hastily fluctuating America, comprehends the requirements to transform herself, and enthusiastically responds “to the speed of transformation, the fluidity of American character and American landscape . . . unwilling to abandon the ride I’m on” (JM 138,139). The metaphors and language used in this novel are all references to travel, to the temporary nature of the diasporic experience. Life is never on time, but rather always on hold, delayed, or enroot to where it is supposed to be. Airport lounges turn out to be familiar and very nearly home like locations while passports signifies the basic to all conceivable chances and waiting rooms represent the development of living. Disturbance, lack of confidence and vagueness are the adjectives of the luminal state as well as the adjectives that describe Jasmine’s ever-evolving identity.

Jasmine in America has such an experience and the diasporic characters for Mukherjee is an everlasting sea voyage whose non-existent ends promise chances but infrequently deliver, it is life of continuous change and transformation. Even though this specific depiction of the diasporic experience may seems somewhat negative, there is as textual moment in which Mukherjee confirms the possibility of change for the diasporic individual. When Jasmine says, “We’ve swallowed the cosmos whole” (JM 240) she put forward that the environment of the diasporic experience is not completely negative, for the individual does in fact gain somewhat positive from the experience itself.

However the diasporic individual may travel in difficult twist and turn route. This struggle is exactly that which make available her with the strength to continue along the path towards a journey’s end that is always within reach but hardly tangible. Indeed, the intestinal space is what allows Jasmine to create her new selves, for within his luminal position, identity is as malleable as location. “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 . . . Nothing is forever, nothing is terrible or so wonderful, that it won’t
disintegrate” (JM 181). The intestinal space is fluid, indeterminate and impermanent,
and must be since it is in between the steady extremes of traditional progressive and
three-dimensional developments. Jasmine exists within this luminal condition;
identity within Jasmine is flexible, continuously evolving and totally unpredictable. A
far better depiction of the diasporic experience presents the difficulties of identity and
insight in a less uncompromising manner. Jasmine chooses entirely to recreate herself
in the face of conflict, resulting in multiple selves that do not exist simultaneously, but
instead interact with one another at different junctures in the text, with a constant
progression to the next identity.

In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee has subjugated the journey theme to the maximum
extent. Jasmine experiences the issues of Diaspora such as spiritual quest, a discovery
of herself, a probing of her full potential. As Sumita Roy observes, “out of the journey
that she undertakes to America, to fulfil her mission emerges her inward quest, a
process of unfolding of the self” (184). Jasmine reveals not only the pains and
dislocations of women in Diaspora but also their potential for change, transformation
and work. Her journey characterizes the melting of Indian and American cultures and
how a more tangled view of cultural identity can positively transform these who come
into contact with it. In this way, Jasmine’s transformation provides a map for the new
maximalist American.

Jasmine is rooted in her native country and possess apparently well-defined
gendered identities based on the issues of class, caste, religion, sexuality and
education. When she migrate, she experience physical and psychological
displacement from her homeland, she come into contact with difference and, then, she
cross the borders and disrupt the definitions of gender roles and relations and her belief in supposedly stable identities. These disruptions and border crossings in identity can be related to the concept of diaspora.

Thus in *The Middleman and the Other Stories* and *Jasmine*, Mukherjee has shown the issues of Diaspora by taking the theme of assimilation of Third world immigrants into the American Melting Pot. It seems that the journey of an uprooted immigrant who has to go through many issues of Diaspora finally reaches to the cultural adaptation and it finds its best expression in *The Middleman and the Others Stories* and *Jasmine*. *Jasmine’s* protagonist, of the same name Jasmine faces a cross-cultural reality and is finally able to establish herself in a new dwelling and a new fluid identity which is the outcome of cultural fusion.

In her interview to Ameena Meer, Mukherjee accepts, “it was in writing that book transformed myself from being an expatriate to realizing I’m an immigrant . . . my roots are here. There is no going back” (26). She further says, “ I think of Jasmine and many of my characters, as being people who are pulling themselves out of the very traditional world in which their fate is predetermined, their destiny resigned to the stars” (26), but Jasmine says: I’m going to reposition the stars” (26).

Jasmine, really known for an American attitude and mind, who is prepared to take in spite of making a lot of mistakes? Like Mukherjee, Jasmine wants to feel like a part of the community she has adopted and puts roots down. So she enthusiastically pays the price: the suffering of self-transformation. There is a ‘two-way transformation’ of American immigrants from the First and Third world on which Mukherjee needs to concentrate. Jasmine is not only transformed hereditarily by Americans but also she transforms the typical white people like Taylor, Bud, and Darrel in America. Today the American family made by accommodation of Whites
and Non-whites. Since 1965, non-traditional, non-white immigrants from the Third world countries are transforming the national identity of America as America transforms them- their cultural and social life. The whites now accept non-whites as their family members; love them as a father, mother, husband, lover, wife or children. They are accepted. So for non-whites diaspora, displacement is not painful like expatriates. They are relocate on a social basis and ethnically and their relocation in new soil turns successful.

The researcher shows the issues of immigration through Mukherjee’s *The Middleman and the Other Stories* and *Jasmine*. The protagonist due to immigration, they loses their mother land’s identity, culture, heritage and values and after reaching the Promised Land, they accepts the identities given to her for the survival in the new land. Immigration provides mixed state of mind: on the one hand, an immigrant is looking forward to a new world promising a wonderful future and on the other hand, the immigrant is involuntary to forget certain precious values and homeland cultural ethos to get into the Promised Land. Such high spirits takes them further to challenge such heredities that an Indian immigrants like Panna, Maya, Danny Sahib and Jasmine has to face either in their name of survival or comprise. However it is a matter of survival Panna, Maya, Danny and Jasmine acquires achievement in the process of Americanization.