

# A series of adventures in jasmine by bharati mukherjee

[Business](#), [Strategy](#)



In *Jasmine* (1989) Mukherjee tries to unravel the complicated layers of cross cultural reality through a series of adventures which the heroine undertakes, during her odyssey from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of a rootless person piqued by a depression sense of isolation all around. The novel focuses on Jasmine a young village girl from Punjab, who ventures as an undocumented woman and as a widow to the United States, where her fate will be rewritten. The village astrologer under a his banyan tree foretelling Jasmine's widowhood and exile. Lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree in the village of Hasnapura, an astrologer cupped his ears his satellite dish to the stars and excite. She was only seven then fast and venturesome, scabrous armed from leaves and thorns (01). It all turns out just as nastily as he says it will, but at the same time Jasmine is a survivor, a fighter many transformation Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane via divergent geographical locales like Punjab, Florida, New York, Iowa and finally California. At every step Jasmine revolts against her fate and the path drawn for her. The narrative shuttles between past and present, between India of the narrator's early life and America of her present one.

The past is Jyoti's childhood in the small village of Hasnapura Punjab, her marriage to Prakesh Vih and the consequences leading to her departure to America. The present is her life as Jane in Baden, Iowa where she is a live-in companion to Bud Ripple Meyer, a small-town banker. The past is therefore constructed through constant flashbacks from the Baden location of narration, which function also as flashforwards if we consider the time setting of Hanapur in Punjab where the fabula begins. Jasmine is not yet, she is called Jyoti and is seven years old girl, the fifth of long daughters. God's

cruel, my mother complained to waste brains on a girl. And God's still more cruel, she said, to make a fifth daughter beautiful instead of the first. by the time my turn to marry came around, there be no dowry money left to gift me the groom I deserved (40). To exhibit the force of her belief she refuses to marry the widower selected by her grandmother eventually ends up marrying Prakash Viji in a court of law. The cursed and hapless village girl in Jyoti becomes Jasmine, a city women, wife of a modern man Prakash who wishes her to call him by his first name. This christening means much to her. He gave me a new name Jasmine. He said you are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine, you'll quicken the whole world with your perfume. After marriage she becomes a true wife in the Indian sense of the term identifying her husband's wishes with those of hers. Prakash's ardent wish is to secure admission in some obscure American Institute of technology. They start dreaming about their life in America but as the ill-luck would have it.

At the age of fourteen her brother friend, Prakash, a twenty four year old electronic student whose voice she falls in love with him. Jyoti states at this point She was a sister without dowry, but she didn't have to be a sister without prospects. Prakash plays the modern enlightened man. The wedding is, in fact, not a religious one. No dowry is exchanged. He refuses to live with his extended family and moves with Jyoti to Amristsar, the biggest city in Punjab. Whereas in traditional India women address their husbands formally. He also the time being, and he encourages her to read his manuals to improve herself and cherish a better future for them both probably in America, the land of possibility, in order to break away for good from the

Indian immutability. Prakash procures admission in an American university in Florida. While on a shopping spree Prakash is killed by a terrorist's bomb, leaving behind the seventeen-year old wife Jasmine. When her friend Vimla's husband died Vimla committed suicide by burning herself with kitchen stove, which in dictates the unbearable conditions of the widow in Indian society. Even her mother tries to commit suicide when her father dies. For Jasmine there is hardly any choice. She cannot live in the village with her widowed mother cut off from the normal way of living, nor can she think of committing suicide as Vimla does. She decide to carry out her husband's dream of going to an American university, but only to bus with the forgot passport and Prakash's papers, his blue suit, and especially her white sari she sets off for America. Jasmne's mission adds comic touch to the immigrant's excuses of leaving India and seeking America. It does not create sympathy for thr pitiable plight of the young widow.

Jasmine journey through different continents, as also through hunger ill treatment, violence, rape and murder but she is not frightened at any time since her mission, her death wish can be fulfilled only in the desired but alien new land. She is willing to make all compromises and adjustments hence there are no deeply stirring situation's Jasmine hops from place to place and person to person trying to find real place in her life. The women who surrendered to Prakash to be molded according to his ideas is the person who wants to be shaped according to the American way of life, and secure a place as a legal wife to an all-white American. Her experience of having been raped by the Half-face does not leave any traumatic effect on her psyche

and Jasmine seems to take it in her stride as an American evil only to be crushed and conquered by the Indian virtue through the symbolic Kali that she turns into. Rapes are being committed everywhere, here and there. One the Half-face since Jasmine the Jane states, “ Which of us is the undetected murderer of the Half-face monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms”. (127) Jasmine has no time to ponder over the consequences of murder and so must think of her mission to move away from the scene of violence she could not let her personal dishonor disrupt her mission. After burning Prakash’s clothes and papers she decides that she just cannot commit suicide. She walks into the streets of the American dawn. Her Indian identify leaves her at this point the desire to fulfil a mission which had seen her through the difficult passage to America, is abandoned. The body becomes mere shell, soon to be discarded and what she discards is her Indian psyche and is reborn in America as Jase and Jane. Shuttling between the past and the present, the first person narrative reaches its turning point. She is reborn several times.

In Lillian Gordon and while Hayes represent the best America has to offer. Low tolerance for reminiscence, bitterness or nostalgia characterizes Lillian she would not allow any one’s past to deform. Jasmine’s description of her aptly sums up her belief in an alternate reality: “ She wasn’t missionary dispensing new visions and stamping out the old she was a facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute ordinariness that we ached for”. (131) After this violent encounter with the ugly world, Jasmine starts afresh sans

money, sans idea about the surroundings hungry and thirsty, broken both in body and mind. Incidentally she happens to meet Lillian Gordon, a kind Quaker lady who harbors her, pities her situation, calls her Jazzy and teaches her to talk, walk and dress like an American. She advises her let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you. Lillian Gordon is committed to help the illegal immigrants. Later on she encourages Jasmine to proceed to New York for a suitable job with an introductory letter to her daughter staying there. After reaching New York Jasmine decides to visit her husband's former teacher Devinder Vadhera who has been instrumental in her husband's admission. His home in Flushing Queens is part of Punjabi immigrant ghetto. Vadhers never try to come out of their four walls, the artificially maintained Indianness. Jasmine remembers her five months sojourn at Flushing with pain and despair.