



BOOK REVIEW OF *JASMINE*
WRITTEN BY BHARATI MUKHERJEE

A FINAL PROJECT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Writing

Literary work is one kind of human's works which represents human's life. Novel is one of the literary works in literature. A novel is a long narrative, as a form of prose, which describes fictional characters and events. It is usually in the form of a sequential story. Moreover, novel also tells about a real story or fiction which happens in the present, past or future. By reading a novel, people do not only know the information of an event which has happened in the story, but also experience the impact that will influence their present reality or their future.

The writer chooses a novel entitled *Jasmine* written by Bharati Mukherjee to be reviewed for his final project. The novel is interesting to be reviewed because the story tells about a young Indian woman living in the United States who tries to adapt to the American way of life in order to be able to survive. The story begins with Jasmine, a Punjabi girl from the village of Hasnapur, a village in Jullundhar District, India who always faces unexpected events. She got married at very young age. Her father died of bullhit. Her husband died of the bomb explosion and she was raped after illegally entering the United States. The writer finds that the story is interesting to be analyzed, so the writer decides to reveal strengths and weakness of this novel.

1.2 The Objectives of Study

The writer has some purposes in writing this final project:

1. To describe the theme of the novel *Jasmine* written by Bharati Mukherjee.
2. To describe the strengths and weakness of the novel *Jasmine* written by Bharati Mukherjee.

1.3 Biography of the Writer

Based on www.voices.cla.umn.edu.com, Bharati Mukherjee (born July 27, 1940) is an Indian-born American writer who is currently a professor in the department of English at the University of California, Berkeley. Mukherjee was born in

Kolkata, West Bengal, India. In 1947, her father was given a job in England and he brought his family to live there until 1951, which gave Mukherjee an opportunity to develop and perfect her English language skills.

She has written more than 7 novels, which have been published in several countries. Her other notable and famous works are *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Darkness* (1985), *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002)

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY

The book begins with the twenty-four-year-old narrator, Jane Ripplemeyer (Jasmine), living as the common-law wife of Bud Ripplemeyer, a fifty-four-year-old banker in Baden, Elsa County, Iowa. Through flashbacks, she recalled her story from childhood in Hasnapur, a village in Jullundhar District, Punjab, India, where she was born as Jyoti, the unwanted fifth daughter in a poor, displaced Hindu family. Jasmine was a seven-year-old girl. An astrologist informed her that she will be widowed and exiled one day. The astrologer told the girl that one day she could not challenge the destiny. As Jasmine ran away from the astrologer, she fell and a twig cut her forehead. This made it appear as if she had what the Oracle called a third eye, a way of seeing things that others could not.

In the story, she marries Prakash Vih at the age of fourteen, an engineering student and a modern city man who did not believe in the subservient role of the Indian wife. Prakash renamed her "Jasmine" and gradually molds her to become a new woman. Jasmine and Prakash lived in a small apartment in the city of Hasnapur, India. At home, Prakash studied for his new career in electronics. He and Jasmine had dreams for their life as co-owners of an electronics store one day. Prakash revealed that he had been accepted in a trade school in Tampa, Florida, and he showed Jasmine the brochures of the Indian students standing in front of palm trees. Jasmine was not old enough to get a visa yet, so Prakash planned to work for a few years to save some money. Unfortunately, before both of them went to America together, her husband died of the bomb explosion. Rising up from the death of her husband, Jasmine decided aboard to America by herself, pursuing her husband dream.

The conflict began when Jasmine illegally entered America by boarding in a fisherman ship named *The Gulf Shuttle*. She was the only girl in the ship and got many bad treatments from the leader named *The Half Faced*. After long days, Jasmine finally set her foot in the land America. Sadly, she was raped by the leader of the ship on her first day in America.

Her first day in America is rough. She did not know anything about America and she did not fluently speak English. Fortunately, she met a white old lady named Lilian Gordon. The old lady gave Jasmine foods, water and shelter for few days. Lilian is a kind-hearted woman. She wastought Jasmine how to speak English, cooking hamburgers and many things in how to be a good American. Lilian also taught her to act as American and told Jasmine to be confident and did not act suspiciously when in a public area. Finally, Jasmine decidedto move to New York in order to pursue her goals.

In New York, Jasmine lived in Professor DevinderVadhera's apartment, her husband siblings went back in Hasnapur, India. In the apartment, Jasmine lived with Professor Devinder families. Professor Devinder is a generous man. He made a green card for Jasmine in order to make her be a part of American citizen.Jasmine got her green card. With that card, she was officially the citizen of America. She could get a job and pursue her goals.

In the last part of the story, Jasmine had to choose between two men. One is the man whom she decided to spend the rest of her life with, and the other one is the one she truly loved. Finally, she decided to be with the one she loved (Bud Ripplemeyer) and moved to California. She then changed her name as Jane Ripplemeyer and lived happily with her new husband, Bud Ripplemeyer.

CHAPTER III

The Review of *Jasmine* Written by Bharati Mukherjee

3.1 Themes

3.1.1 Major Theme

Theme is important elements of the novel and contains the main subjects of the entire story line. The writer analyzes that love is the major theme in this novel. Love is a feeling toward other people that will make someone do anything for the ones she/he loves. In this novel, love theme play an important role in the part of story. At first, Jasmine marries Prakash Viji at the age of fourteen. Although their marriage is arranged by their parents, but love is growing as they through it. Jasmine really loves her husband. She has never cheated on him and her love is only for him. Sadly, her husband dies right before they are moving to America. In America, Jasmine feels like that she is alone in this world, her husband died and nowhere to go. Fortunately, she meets Bud Ripplemayer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. Bud marries Jasmine, and then live happily in Baden, Iowa.

3.1.2 Minor Theme

The minor theme of this novel is struggle. Based on the Jasmine character, the author gives the lesson to the readers about how to struggle for life. In this novel, the reader gets the lesson from the story of Jasmine which she always struggles to face her problems. One of the hardest problems she has ever faced is when she is struggling herself from being raped by Captain of *Gulf Shuttle Ship*. In that ship, Jasmine defends herself by fighting back against the Captain. Although she gets many punches and kicks in her body, her struggle is paid back when she can kill the man who was raped her.

3.2. The Strengths

3.2.1. Powerful Characters

According to Abrams, characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the readers as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual,

and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it (1999:32).

The author of this book gives character to each figure with great detail. On *Jasmine* by Bharatii Mukherjee, the writer captures 3 main powerful characters that makes this novel become interesting to be read.

1. Brave Heart Jasmine

Jasmine is the main character of this novel. A character who evolves many times as the story goes. Jasmine is a tough and independent girl. She gets through many hard obstacles in her life. being born in a poor family, her father died of a bull hit, her husband died of a bomb and many other obstacles. She is also a brave woman. She has fought and stabbed a man who was raped her in order to defend herself as shown in quotation below:

I began to shiver. The blade need not be long, only sharp, and my hand not strong, only quick. His eyes fluttered open even before I felt the metal touch his throat, and his smile and panic were nearly instantaneous. I wanted that moment when he saw me above him as she had last seen me, naked, but now with my mouth open, pouring blood, my red tongue out. (Mukherjee, 1989:105)

In her lifetime, her name changes several times. Jyoti is the name given by her parents, then her husband changes it to Jasmine, and finally she changes her name to Jane Ripplemayer.

2. Obsessive Prakash Vijh

Prakash Vijh is a good husband for Jasmine. He does not consider Jasmine the same as other indian girls. He wants Jasmine to develop herself and be a smart woman. Prakash Vijh is an obsessive guy. He has a dream to move and have a good life in America. Prakash Vijh's obsession to live in America is shown in the quotation below:

Jasmine, what do you think of America? I didn't know what to think of America. I'd read only Shane book and seen only one movie. It was too big country, too complicated a question. I said, "if you're there, I'll manage, when you're at work in America, I'll stay inside. Listen to me Jasmine. I want for us to go away and have areal life. I've had it up to here with backward. Corrupt, mediocre fools. (Mukherjee, 1989:73)

Unfortunately, Prakash Vihj dies before his dream comes true. The dead of her husband detremينات Jasmine to continue her husband dream to move to America

3. Kind Hearted Bud Ripplemeyer

Bud is a second husband of Jasmine. He is a kind hearted man. He works as a banker in Iowa. Bud is a crippled because of his feet which can not walk properly. Although he lives in a wheelchair, Jasmine always sees him as a normal person. She really loves him and will spend her time with him. Jasmine decides to change her name to Jane Ripplemeyer when she marries Bud.

3.2.2 A Good Writing of Setting Place

Setting plays an important role in the development of story in novel. A good and diverse settings of place can make the reader enjoy to read every page of novel. In this novel, the author gives the reader various kinds of settings of place. The first place is in Hasnapur, a rural area in India. There are many obstacles that Jasmine faces in this place, starting from living in poor condition and facing her father and husband died. Then, the story moves to fisherman ship named *The Gulf Shuttle*. The author describes this setting with beautiful words as shown in the quotation below:

In the new world, on a shrimper out of Grand Cayman called The Gulf Shuttle, four of us bound for the gulf coast of Florida slept under the tarp. Gold gulls straddled topaz waves. Lapis fish leaped toward coral clouds. Some days the ocean was as stocked and still as an aquarium. (Mukherjee, 1989:93)

The next place is in New York, this setting is a starting point for old Jasmine to turn into a brand new Jasmine. In there, Jasmine lives as American. She leaves out all her Hindhu tradition and does all things like Americans as shown in the quotation below:

I could not admit that i had accustomed myself to American clothes. American clothes disguised my widowhood. In a T-shirt and cords, I was taken for a student. In this apartment of artificially maintained indianess, i wanted to distance myself from everything Indian. (Mukherjee, 1989:128)

There is no brief and clear description about the exact time when the story occurs. There are only few details of setting of time that Bharati Mukherjee describes in the story. The example of setting of time are like *lifetimes ago, the next may, and eighteen years after the partition riots.*

3.2.3 A Good Choice of Point of View

The third strength of the novel is its point of view. The writer uses Jasmine as the first person in this novel. Jasmine tells everything that happens to her from the beginning until the end of the story. The usage of this point of view will help the reader to understand the story easily and it feels like reading Jasmine's own diary as shown as in the quotation below:

I fell. My teeth cut into my tongue. A twig sticking out of the bundle of firewood I'd scavanged punched a starshaped wound into my forehead. I lay still. The astrologer reentered his trance. I was nothing, a speck in the solar system. Bad times were on their way. I was helpless, doomed. The star bled. (Mukherjee, 1989: 1)

3.2.4 Inspiring Moral Messages of the Novel

In writing a literary work, the author is not only required to produce the finest theme and good charaters, but is also required to convey messages. This novel contains moral message that the readers can learn along the plot.

The moral message conveyed in *Jasmine* is that someone should never give up on life. This novel tells the story of Jasmine with all the twists and turns of her life. She suffers because the death of her husband and her father. Ironically, she was raped by the chief of the ship, but she is always strong and tough. She never shows her grief in front of others. The happiness slowly comes to her when she begins to meet with her true love, Bud Ripplemeyer.

3.3The Weaknesses

3.3.1 Complicated Plot

Apart from those strong points,*Jasmine* has also some weak points. The first weakness of this novel is the plot of the story which is flashback and too complicated. At the

beginning chapter the readers will read about the childhood story of Jasmine in India and then the next chapter is the life of Jasmine in Iowa, America. This novel starts with the childhood story of Jasmine as shown in the quotation below:

Lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree in the village of hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears-his satellite dish to the stars- and foretold my widowhood and exile. I was only seven then, fast and venturesome, scabrous-armed from leaves and thorn. (Mukherjee, 1989: 1)

In the next chapter, the story changes from childhood to adulthood life of Jasmine as shown in the quotation below when she is talking with Taylor, her neighborhood in Iowa.

Taylor didn't want me to run away from Iowa. How can anyone leave New York, he said, how can anyone leave New York, you belong here. Iowa's dull an it's flat, he said. (Bharati Mukherjee, 19889:4)

The writer thinks that this kind of plot will make the reader hard to understand the story. In addition, it will take huge amount of time for the readers to remember the details of the story.

3.3.2 Abundance of Minor Characters

The next weakness is the author gives too many characters in this novel. There are some supporting characters that appear in the story but they never develop. The characters just appear but do not give any contribution to the story, for example: Arvind Prar and Hari Prar. Both of them are Jasmine's brother, they show up in the beginning of story, but they are gone in the middle of the story.

3.3.3 Confusing Uncommon Words

The last weakness is some strange terms or uncommon words which are used in this book. The authors do not give footnotes or enough explanation about the uncommon words. The uncommon word is mostly written in Indian language. This uncommon words makes the reader often confused in understanding the meaning of the words. The example of this uncommon word is *Berhula* and *Pygmalion* as shown in the quotation below:

Fate is fate. When Berhula's bridegroom was fated to die of snakebite on their wedding night, did building a steel fortress prevent his death? A magic snake will penetrate solid walls when necessary..... Pygmalion wasn't a play I'd seen or read then, but I realize now how much of professor Higgins there was in my husband. (Mukherjee, 1989: 1,70)

The terms above do not have further explanation or footnotes on the novel. This uncommon words will make the readers wonder about the meaning. In addition, this will make the reader hard to understand the story. The writer suggests that when the readers find uncommon words they can search the meaning of the words by browsing on internet.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Jasmine is one of the best novels written by Bharati Mukherjee. Based on the review that the writer has done, the novel has two main themes. The major theme is about Jasmine's love story and the minor one is about life struggle.

Aside of this strong theme, the other strengths of this novel are the use of powerful and detailed characters that support the flow of the story and the unique of writing style that makes this novel different from other novels. In addition, the uses of first point of view will help the readers understand the story easily.

On the contrary, this novel also has some weakness. The first weakness of this novel is the use of flashback and complicated plot. The use of this plot will make the reader hard to understand the story. The next weakness is abundance of minor characters that do not give any contributions to the story. The last weakness is the use of uncommon words that makes the reader often confused in understanding the meaning of the words.

In conclusion, it is an amazing and interesting book to read. There are some moral messages conveyed in the novel that the readers can learn along the plot. The writer concludes that this novel is highly recommended to be read.

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