

## The effect of Transference and a portrayal of Resilience as a Self Defense Mechanism: A Critical Study of 'Jasmine' by Bharathi Mukherjee



### Literature

**KEYWORDS :** Transference, Self defense, cognitive dissonance.

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this paper is to throw light on the concept of transference, which sets in the mind of an individual at a very early age, causing dissonance. One tries to overcome it by embracing resilience. This is an attempt to show how a rural girl is affected by transference, and how she wins over the mindset with determination and grit exhibiting resilience, by correlating a few incidences in the childhood of the protagonist Jyothi, in the novel Jasmine, written by Bharathi Mukherjee. Bharati Mukherjee is a gifted writer who can deftly portray womanhood in the contemporary world with its diverse problems, due to emotional conflicts. Her characters undergo many trials and tribulations, in realising their dreams. They adapt to the situations and transform themselves and become successful. They refashion and reconstruct their identity, and attain self fulfillment*

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Bharati Mukherjee is a gifted writer who can deftly portray womanhood in the contemporary world with its diverse problems, due to emotional conflicts. As Alliya Parveen affirms "To realise their ambitions and to experience a sense of liberation from their old, social, traditional mores, the characters of her stories undergo deep emotional, mental, and physical suffering"

Her novel Jasmine revolves around a village bred, young girl Jyothi and her crusade through life. Jasmine, suggestive by the name itself, is a story spun around a tender, soft, utterly feminine woman Jyothi renamed as Jasmine by her husband who on account of traumatic experiences, poses to be hardcore, modern, strong minded woman. A search within will unveil the real character. The woman's mind can be looked upon like an iceberg, the major part lies hidden beneath the surface.

The protagonist Jyothi, in Jasmine, is a fine example of a woman, who acts in conflict or disagreement opposing her true self. This mental frame of mind develops in her early childhood and is the root cause of all her problems. This happens, due to a deep-rooted fear about her widowhood and exile as predicted by an astrologer. His prophecy leaves an indelible impression in her mind, that she would be a widow. It creates a sense of insecurity of mind throughout the novel. Jyothi, alias Jasmine, behaves abnormally, which can be justified as resilience - a defense mechanism. Defense mechanism protects the mind against feelings, thoughts, that are too difficult for the conscious mind to cope with. Resilience is the ability to fight back adverse situations. To recover from misfortunes it is a curative, to cope with conflicting emotions, a strategy to battle out internal conflicts in mind and achieve internal harmony.

Jyothi, a seven year old Punjabi girl is predicted to become a widow and go into exile by an astrologer. Being in her formative years, the predictions of the fortune teller ruffles her mind. Jyothi hides her alarm and argues with the astrologer saying he is wrong. She shields herself by adorning a modern outlook.

"No, I shouted". "You are a crazy old man. You don't know what my future holds"(3)

I agree with Irshad Md when he says "Jasmine is a remarkable novel by Bharathi Mukherjee in which she de-

picts very vividly the hypersensitive mind of a female"(8) Jyothi spills the beans by voicing out her anxious, gullible mind. It seems obvious that she is a conservative girl who believes in superstitions and illogical premonitions. This incident breeds an inveterate inclination to react to a problem in an indifferent and pre-conceived manner. These beliefs deeply ingrained in her, constitutes the core of her psyche. Instead of brushing off the astrologer's words as a casual remark, Jyothi takes it to heart.

Sigmund Freud coined the word "Transference" to refer to this ubiquitous psychological phenomenon. Transference is a concept that refers to our natural tendency to respond to certain situations in a unique and predetermined way. Predetermined by much earlier formative experiences usually within the context of the primary attachment relationship. These patterns deeply ingrained constitute the core of a person's problem. One needs to understand them well to make useful choices. This transference in Jyothi leads to distortions in all her interactions and relationships.

After hearing the predictions of the soothsayer, a perplexed Jyothi is hit by the astrologer and her forehead is scarred. She is physically hurt. This is symbolic of the pains and throes that awaited her in future. Jyothi joins her sisters who make matters worse, by acknowledging the hurt on the forehead as a permanent scar. Jyothi retaliates immediately and says

"It's not a scar," I shouted, "It's my third eye."(5). Here she becomes resilient.

Samuel Sagan asserts, "The third eye is the gate that opens to the space of Consciousness and to the inner worlds. It is also the main organ through which the body of energy can be awakened and governed. So practically the third eye acts as a switch, which can activate higher frequencies of the body of energy and thereby lead to higher States of Consciousness". So the third eye is like a Mariner's Compass. It helps to look beyond one's normal vision. To look into the future.

Here one can observe the spirit of resilience in Jyothi. She is unwilling to accept the astrologer's prediction. She is not able to be totally impervious too. She does not want to be bound by superstition and tradition. There is a discrepancy in the perception of her intellectual mind and her conservative mind. She lands in a state of confusion. She feels her image is fallen. She wishes to uplift her image. She elevates herself, takes refuge in the spiritual realm. She calls herself a sage, a symbol of self denial, a person who has given up all material pleasures. A person who can look into the future with his third eye or wisdom.

Jyothi does not want to succumb to the social stigmas around her. She identifies herself as a fighter and adapter

from birth. One can understand the concealed determination in Jyothi to break free from the clutches of destiny. To gain prominence as a means of celebrating womanhood.

"I was seven then, a reader, a counter, a picture drawer."

Her need for self-identity can be seen here. Conflicting inside her mind with the belief of a doomed future and the feeling of having been born as an unwanted girl child she strives to excel. This kind of a reaction helps her reconstruct her self image. Thus she becomes resilient to her troubles and overcomes them successfully.

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