

her position in a feudalistic society when she says, “Feudalism! I am a window in the war of feudalism”. Realising the fact that Prakash has left neither in-laws nor children to serve in her widowhood, Jasmine gets herself out of the patriarchal society by deciding to leave for America to fulfill her husband’s dream. She feels that Jasmine cannot exist without Prakash since he is the one who gave her a new identity. She decides to join her husband in spirit by committing sati.

Jasmine’s rape by Half –Face after reaching the US infuses in her the destructive energy of the Goddess Kali. Her satisfaction and calmness after killing Half-Face signifies her gaining strength from the Goddess of Destruction and her rebirth in the host country. Bharati Mukherjee claims that it is Jasmine’s Hindu upbringing and not America’s optimism that enables her to face the hardship. She feels that she is no longer pure and clean to perform sati: “Lord Yama [the God of Death], who had wanted me, who had courted me, and whom I’d flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me”. In self-immolation tradition, “a woman who is about to practice sati is not allowed to be touched by a non-Hindu”. Being touched and raped by Half -Face, a non-Hindu, honour and chastity as a faithful wife have been tarnished: “I had protected this sari [the white sari for widow], and Prakash’s suit, through it all. Then he [Half -Face] had touched it. He had put on the suit, touched my sari, my photographs and Ganpati [her sandal wood Ganpati sculpture]. She is no longer qualified to undergo the sacred rita as per the Oriental culture, to prove her loyalty and fulfill her dharma as a widow.

Lillian Gordon’s renaming of Jasmine to Jazzy symbolises her entry into the American culture. She begins to adopt the ways of American life and culture in order to survive. Gordon tells her, “...if you walk and talk American, they’ll think you were born here. Most Americans can’t imagine anything else”. Jasmine learns the fact that “American” does not necessarily or simply mean born in the United States or being white. Rather, it is the appropriation or annexation of social behaviour and cultural norms which determines what or who American is. All these changes adapted by Jasmine show how the immigrants are forced to change themselves drastically to be able to begin a new life in a foreign land. Jasmine as an Indian immigrant interacts with the new world and proceeds towards the process of transformation and absorbs the new culture.

The novel shows cultural domination, economic exploitation, and subjugation meted out towards immigrants in the US. Asians, Africans, Chinese, and Japanese who were Undocumented were called illegal aliens. The taxi driver who drove Jasmine to the Vadheras’ house was a respectable doctor in Kabul. “In Kabul I was a doctor. We have to be here living like dogs because they’ve taken everything from us... He went on about the wrongs. Bitterness seemed to buoy him, make him special... on the streets I saw only more greed, more people like myself. New York was an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens”. Women from Trinidad and Barbados, like Letitia who came in search of decent employment end up with cheap labour. The ethnic identity of Kanjobal women from Guatemala and part of Mexico who do not speak English was relegated to the margin.

Jasmine’s living with the Vadheras reminded her of her past. She feels alienated and suffers from a state of meaninglessness. Shalini Yadav states, “While Jasmine creates a new identity for every new situation, her former identities are never completely erased, for they emerge in specific