Independence In Jasmine Essay, Research Paper

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Women in Literature

INDEPENDENCE OF JASMINE

Independence is one topic that is very important in Jasmine. The main character, Jyoti has to always deal with independence all her life. From the

time she is in India to the time she is in the United States, she has never

strived for independence; it always seems to come to her.

As a young girl in Hasnapur, India Jyoti was born into a poor

Hindi family that lost everything during the partition, and as a result has

been left with a mud hut and farmland in the Punjabi countryside of

Northern India. Jyoti is raised in a poor home where she is taught to

cook, clean and look up to the males in her society. As a young girl Jyoti

is not influenced to be independent. Like every girl in the village she is

expected to receive a little bit of education and then go back to her home and

get ready to be married off.

Fortunately a teacher named Masterji saw talent

in Jyoti and begged her father to let her continue with her education.

When Jasmine agrees to continue her education and says she wants to be a

doctor and open her own clinic, her father was in complete shock as well as

her grandma. Her father?s instant reaction was, ?The girl is mad! The girl is

mad!?

When she is asked about continuing her education, it is the first time

in her life where she is given any type of independence. Continuing her

education would mean that she wouldn?t have to be dependent on any man?s

well being. Although it is good that she will have a future and will continue

to be educated, Jyoti is still mentally attached to the sexist ways of her

culture. She still marries and falls in love with men, by looking up at them

and honoring their ways. Jyoti had no honor for herself and what she

could do independently. It was all about the males in her life and their

greatness, because in her society the powerful people were males.

Jyoti?s marriage to a man named Prakash is a big example of her lack

of independence. She never got engaged to Prakash. She married Prakash

after knowing him for only a couple of weeks. Although her marriage to

Prakash was common in her society, Prakash wasn?t a common Indian. She

was lucky to be married to Prakash. Her marriage to Prakash was the second

time in her life that independence came to her. Prakash was against the

feudal system of Hasnapur (the town in which they lived). By being married

to Prakash Jyoti didn?t need to be a humble wife, like all the other women in

her society. She again experienced independence. The independence to call

her husband by his first name and to talk to him in any way she pleased.

Prakash even gave her a new name, Jasmine.

Independence to continue education and now independence to do as

she pleases in marriage, Jyoti, now Jasmine was a lucky woman who even

argued with her husband at times. She did not strive for independence, it just

came to her.

When her husband argued with her it was because he wanted

her to think freely, while she wanted to be a scared, humble, dependent wife.

For example, once Jasmine was arguing about having a child, which was a

way for to become the typical housewife of her society. Prakash?s response

was not one common in the feudal society they lived in. His response was,

?We aren?t going to spawn! We aren?t ignorant peasants?.

Prakash gave Jasmine freedom of speech and the skills to be

strong and not afraid to speak her mind. Prakash always told her to challenge

him and keep arguing with him. He did not punish her when she argued him.

He gave her the skills and self-confidence to argue to a man, those skills will

open doors for her.

Prakash gave Jasmine courage and told her that they would move to

America. Prakash had a scholarship to the US and on the last day when he

was preparing to go to the states, work and then send back for Jasmine, he

died. The religious conflicts of Northern India killed him as well as Masterji.

Prakash died because of a bomb that was put in their home by a person

against Hindus. Earlier in her life Jasmine had lost her father due to a bull.

Her father cared for her and was her future. After losing her father she lost

Masterji, a Sikh who taught her all her life and motivated her to continue her

studies. Masterji was harassed and killed by anti-Sikhs. Now she has lost

another teacher, her husband.

As a widow, Jasmine returned to live with her mother in a widow?s

hut and has to listen to her widowed grandma tell her that what happened to

her husband was a punishment from God, because they weren?t a traditional

couple. Jasmine has now lost all the people who gave her independence and

taught her to be independent. She remembered that Prakash wanted for the

both of them to go to America and live real lives with money and freedom.

Jasmine decided to use the independence she was given and asked her

brothers to help her use the Visa her husband had and to arrange for her a

trip to America. Now, she is being independent and doesn?t rely on men to

supply it for her.

Jasmine immigrated illegally to America. She lost her independence

after traveling a long way illegally in old planes and broken down ships. Her

final destination was the Florida Keys, where a man brought her in

America illegally and then raped her as a payment to him for bringing her in

to the states. After being forcibly raped, Jasmine killed the man and then

went out to try to find Tampa University where Prakash and her were

supposed to be. As a religious act, her intention was to burn Prakash?s

belongings at the University because it was where he?d want to be. At this

time she was raped and lost. Fortunately a woman picked her up from the

streets and took her in to her home. The woman empowered her again,

helping her gain back Independence.

At the woman?s house, Jasmine is kept from INS. Jasmine tells the

lady, Lillian that she has a friend in New York, Prakash?s former teacher

who had helped Prakash reach the states. By then she had gained back the

independence to move on. As a widow, Jasmine uses her independence to

find Prakash?s former teacher, Professorji in New York. Fortunately she

found Professorji and he helped her to have a safe shelter in an Indian

community in New York. With the help of Professorji she was about to get a

false green card, but that meant selling her hair, so she took matters into her

own hands and called Kate, Lillian?s daughter.

Kate helped Jasmine find a family to take care of her, this helped

Jasmine becomes American and gains all the skills she would need to be

American. Later on Jasmine moved to Iowa and fell in love with a middle

aged banker, Bud. Jasmine then became Jane, and was living with a middle

aged Iowan. She had taken the Independence she was given and used it to

live her life. Jane was now American, with an American husband and

pregnant with an American, her and Bud also adopted a Vietnamese child

whom she soon had to let go of.

To Jane independence was something that came to her. As a young

girl she was lucky to be embraced with courage and independence. The

Independence that Prakash gave her, stuck with her and made her confident

and strong. It made her believe in herself and take matters into her hands.

Prakash allowed her to have no fear of men and that helped her come to

America and live a happy life with Bud.

Independence is an important topic in Jasmine, the main character,

Jane got her independence from many people, which helped her to build a

better life for herself. Without independence Jane would not have lived a

good life as a widow in Hasnapur, where she would live alone and in

poverty all her life.

Mukherjee, Bharati. Jasmine. New York:First Edition,1989