

**REPRESENTATION OF ASIAN WOMEN'S PERSEVERANCE IN JASMINE BY  
BHARATI MUKHERJEE AND THE RULES FOR VIRGIN BY AMY TAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Everyone must have difficulties in order to pursue their dreams, but at the end of the day, it all depends on how we react and take new actions as the next step to going through our problems. As experienced by the character Jasmine in the novel entitled Bharati Mukherjee and Violet in the novel "The Rules for Virgin" by Amy Tan. Both authors give examples of the main characters in women figures who have a lower degree and a mindset that can be underestimated by men. Now, they bring a new nuance from a female main character who is portrayed as a person who is diligent, willing to learn and strong in facing all obstacles to reach their dreams. Not only in literary works, even in the real world, a problem is not only owned by men, but women can also experience it even in unexpected levels of difficulty. Obstacles and problems in life are the processes that must be faced by every human being to be able to achieve a better life. Some support from the other people is also very necessary so that, we as humans can continue to live and we can know that in living this life we are not alone.*

**Keywords:** *the main character, mindset, representation, the rules of virgin*

**INTRODUCTION**

Since being born into this world, humans have the same rights and opportunities for themselves to feel happiness in their lives. Both men or women definitely want the best in

their lives, about what they want to do, what they want to get, or about what kind of goals they want to achieve. Nowadays, many people say that trying to make some efforts followed by praying is the best way to chase them all. The effort that must be taken by every human beings must be different in order to get the dreams or desires that they want so much in life.

The good or bad way they take it as their step in trying is absolute will lead to consideration. Those two ways are still not having the possibility yet that there will be no more obstacles and problems facing ahead. This is where humans need to be able to pass through all these difficulties with their own ways that they will choose. As in Bharati Mukherjee's novel entitled "*Jasmine*" and "*The Rules For Virgin*" by Amy Tan is an example of a literary works in the form of prose or novel that raises the story of the strength of a woman who has to go through various ways to overcome some difficulties in her life in order to achieve desires or dreams which she dreamed of in her life.

In some literary works, male figures are often portrayed as the main figure who is strong and has the power to face any kinds of life obstacles and difficulties rather than women in terms of pursuing dreams. For example, the character Jay Gatsby in the novel "*The Great Gatsby*" by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Even the role of women in the story in this novel is described as if they have no power to make a choice and pursue the faith of their own volition independently.

Therefore, Bharati and Amy Tan give some different atmospheres to one of their works to their readers, because in real life, not only men who have a burden and struggle in their lives, but women also feel the same thing even the problems that they are faced more than those of men sometimes. Then, these two writers also provide readers with a different perspective on the female side. That side is powerful, diligent and persistent in living their lives to chasing their dreams, not only rely on their beautiful appearance and graceful nature.

As in general literature, the topics and story ideas that conveyed by the writers must be different in each of them. Likewise with the literary works by these two Asian writers, who have similarities and differences that characterize their respective works. This can be seen in terms of the story, terms of difficulties and the way that the main character chooses to deal with their problems during the process of pursuing their dreams.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

If we examined in terms of the story, the novel "*Jasmine*" by Bharati Mukherjee tells about the story of a young widow named Jyoti from Hasnapur, India and moved to the USA to continue the dream of her former husband, Prakash Vijn. At the beginning of the story, it can be seen that Jasmine was described as a married woman at a very young age of 14 years old because of a demand for tradition and the conditions that she is facing. This figure of Prakash Vijn whose finally gave the title "*Jasmine*" to her which indicates that the woman who had become his wife was no longer named Jyoti.

*"To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine."*

His marriage went well until she really loved Prakash. However, after the death of her husband due to a bomb incident that hit them, the journey of Jasmine's life that must be taken by her became very difficult.

*"I failed you. I didn't get there soon enough. The bomb was meant for me, prostitute, whore."*

As proof of his love for Prakash, Jasmine decided to become an immigrant in the country of the United States to revive her husband's dream.

*“Her exile marks the place where all immigrants struggle with antithetical forces and then come to terms with a third, hybrid way of existence that allows them to move back and forth between two worlds with the least possible dissonance” – Anu Aneja, Penn State University Press*

*“I failed you. I didn’t get there soon enough. The bomb was meant for me, prostitute, whore.”*

*“Later, I thought, We had created life. Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine, and jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash. Vijn & Wife. A vision had formed.”*

*“A village girl, going alone to America, without job, husband or papers? I must be mad!”*

Unlike the work “*Jasmine*” of Bharati Mukherjee, Amy Tan describes a woman as someone who is required to learn and understand all kinds of things as a courtesan to be able to reach happiness in her novel entitled “*The Rules for Virgin*”. Her name is Violet, the main character who is described as having the same age as Jyoti when he first married Prakash, 14 years old. She is described as a young and virgin courtesan from Shanghai, China who is required to understand any kinds of rules and ways to become a courtesan who is able to serve his guests or suitors well, but her virginity still save.

Uniquely, in Amy Tan's novel, there is no dialogue between one character and another, because this novel uses a peripheral point of view or commonly known as the third person perspective or point of view. Then, a large part of the narrator's story is about advice and rules that Violet must understand and adhere to as a courtesan later. Those rules and advice that conveyed by the narrator to Violet are not for the activity that she would apply it well solely, but it is also a form or proof of Violet to be able to chase happiness that every courtesan dreamed about.

Based on the explanation above, both Jasmine and Violet are both depicted as a woman who is at the same age, 14 years old. However, the difficulties that they experienced in their ages are very different and sharply look contrasting.

As a Jasmine or Jyoti, she began her new life by marrying an engineer named Prakash Vijn at her 14 years old. The first difficulty that must be faced by Jasmine in her life is the tradition that he must follow namely to marry at a young age.

This problem still faced by Jasmine calmly and wisely. She also continues to try to adaptation with her new situation which is already in marriage. Fortunately, Prakash made

her feel so much easier, he broke the tradition of married women by allowing Jasmine to call her name with her husband's first name, Prakash while in their tradition a wife is forbidden to do it.

“At the same time, Jasmine illustrates the inherent difficulty of such an attempt, since Mukherjee’s overt critique of debasing stereotypes based on gender and exoticism tends to impede a sustained critique of the problematical representation of India.” - *Re-Inventing Ourselves a Million Times*": Narrative, Desire, Identity, and Bharati Mukherjee's "Jasmine by F. Timothy Ruppel

*“In Hasnapur wives used only pronouns to address their husband. The first months, eager and obedient as I was, I still had a hard time calling him Prakash.”*

This is one problem that is fairly trivial but difficult to do for a Jasmine who is accustomed to following traditions in Hasnapur. The way she chose to continue to deal with the situation was that she still wanted to try, wanting to get used to it, she is even trained herself to call on her husband's first name so that it didn't feel awkward anymore and easy for her.

*"I could have practiced and practiced (in the bathroom, in the living room which was our kitchen) I could say the name without gagging and blushing in front of his friends."*

Then, the difficulty experienced by Jasmine's character was when she arrived in the United States as an illegal immigrant. On his way, she met the man called the Half-Face. She met him while she wanted to cross Europe with his ship,

*"Nights, Half-faces, our captain, lullabied us with his Willie Nelson tapes. Half-Face lost an eye and ear and most of his cheeks in a paddy field in Vietnam. "*

The rape incident happened to Jasmine when she arrived in the United States. Jasmine is starting to feel scared trying to find a way to get out of the situation that she is facing, a situation where she is faced with a bad person who tried to use herself by its beauty.

*"I had to practice and practice (in the bathroom, in the tarped-over corner of the verandah which was our kitchen) so I could say the name without gagging and blushing in front of his friends."*

*"Nights, Half-face, our captain, lullabied us with his Willie Nelson tapes. Half-Face lost an eye and ear and most of his cheek in a paddy field in Vietnam."*

*“Half-Face looked at me, amused.”So, you don’t mind ending up here with me instead of in the back of a cattle truck?” Six of one, he said, half dozen the other. He leaned across my lap to unlock the door on my side. The mangled side of his face came at me, like a bat in a night-black forest. I stepped out of the car, fast.”*

For a woman, of course, the things that happen to Jasmine are hard and difficult to forget in her entire life. The consequences are also not playful because it can cause deep trauma for the rape victim. As Gail Ching-Liang in his journal article entitled *In a free state: Post-colonialism and postmodernism in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction*, Jasmine will feel haunted by fear related to the experience she felt when Half-Face tried to rape her.

*“In the twilight spaces of waiting rooms in airports and railway stations, and trawlers carrying illegal immigrants to Florida, her middle passage is haunted by violence and sexual assaults.”*

However, the figure of Jasmine in this novel is really described as a strong and easy figure to rise again from the adversity. Because she thinks that she came to the United State is to change her destiny and life to be better. Giving up is not the path that Jasmine chooses when facing difficulties. She prefers to deal with it and move on to reach what she dreamed about.

The next problem that Jasmine must face is the diaspora phenomenon that befell her. It should be noted that diaspora is a situation where a person or community revives their native culture elsewhere. In other words, the body possessed by Jasmine in the story has moved in the United States, but his soul and mind are still in an abstract relationship with him in Hasnapur, India. Carmen Wickramagamage from the University of Hawaii at Manoa gave her statement in her article journal entitled *Relocation as Positive Act: The Immigrant Experience in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels* about the things Jasmine experienced when she became a dark immigrant

*“Sociological surveys and literary representations of the New World immigrant experience, for instance, suggest that many immigrants both perceive and experience immigration as deracination and dislocation, leading them to congregate in ethnic enclaves, where they attempt to maintain the illusion of a home away from home.”*

*“They cannot live in and be encompassed by a culture—in this case, the American culture—without entering into some form of interaction with it, although only Jasmine seems able to make that inevitable interaction the occasion for a reinscription of ethnic and gendered subjectivities that is self-transforming.”*

In essence, Carmen explained about immigrants who would eventually change their

identity in the process of adjusting to the new environment or place.

Meanwhile. Violet's character in the novel "The Rules for Virgin" by Amy Tan is equally interesting to discuss. At her young age, Violet had been given very much advice by the narrator to support his career as long as she became a courtesan in the years to come when Violet was 15 years old. The narrator also tells any kinds of things that will happen to her as a challenge to be able to reach happiness.

*"Your defloration happens until the New Year, when you turn fifteen, and I expect you to have many standard suitors by the time Madam is ready to sell your bud."*

The narrator, in her role acting like someone who knows all the ins and outs of being a courtesan and she taught many things to Violet so she will be ready to accept and deal with it. In the "Reputation" section, for example, Violet must go through many ways that have been told by the narrator or her senior, to support her good career and have a reputation as a courtesan who has many suitors. In addition, Violet was also designed by the narrator to be able to go beyond another courtesan in terms of studying song-poems which are usually hummed by courtesan to the suitor. She is required to be able to learn more than 10 song-poems than her seniors.

*"Most learned songs from poems throughout their career. You will not be like most. You will be unusual."*

*"Your defloration won't happen until the New Year, when you turn fifteen, and I expect you to have many ardent suitors by the time Madam is ready to sell your bud."*

*"Most beauties learn only ten song-poems throughout their career. You will not be like most. You will be unusual."*

This certainly can be an obstacle for Violet. The burden that she takes getting heavier because she needs to be able to learn song-poems more than what is usually learned by another courtesan. In this story, Violet's attitude is not explained by the writer because almost all of the narratives in this novel contain advice and ways the narrator gives Violet. Add more, the problems that she faced were not as bad as Jasmine's had, but still, most of the ways and advice are given by the narrator felt burdensome for young girls in Violet's age.

Not only advice and ways to become the courtesan conveyed by the narrator to Violet, we will be often find some sentences spoken by the narrator who intend to encourage the main character, which in this case is required to learn various things related to being a courtesan who will be able to become the Top Ten Beauties of Shanghai, which is one of the

biggest dreams for a courtesan in this region.

*“You are an educated girl, so I know you are capable of learning quickly if you are disciplined. If you want to become one of the Top Ten Beauties of Shanghai, your repertoire must be large enough to choose a different song for each suitor who hosts a dinner in your honor.”*

Next, a concept called Four Necessities was also taught to Violet and she had to work hard for it. Those four necessities are jewelry, furniture, a seasonal contract with a stipend, and comfortable retirement. The first thing that Violet had to do was she had to forget all things that related to love, or in other words, she was forbidden to have affection to her suitors. The thing that conveyed by the narrator is intended to make her not be tempted by the pleasures that become her eternal possession yet. Because the thing that should be focused on as a courtesan is about the Four Necessities, not a man.

*“As a courtesan, you must work toward the Four Necessities: jewelry, furniture, a seasonal contract with a stipend, and a comfortable retirement. Forget about love. You will receive that many times, but none of it is lasting.”*

*“To gain the Four Necessities, You must be popular, desired by many suitors who give you costly gifts. You must be as clearheaded, firm, shrewd, and quick-thinking as a businessman. You offer no bargains, and you never accept anything less than what you are worth.”*

Indeed, this made Violet, the main character, as if to be a materialistic woman. But that is where the courtesan's dream lies, which is to be able to get all the things that become the Four Necessities, the fame they get after serving their suitors, and living happily with what they get from the results of their hard work.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, everyone must have difficulties in order to pursue their dreams, but at the end of the day, it all depends on how we react and take new actions as the next step to going through our problems. As experienced by the character Jasmine in the novel entitled *Bharati* Mukherjee and Violet in the novel *"The Rules for Virgin"* by Amy Tan.

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