

## Tracing the Trajectory of Female Liminal Personae: Elif Shafak's Honour and Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine

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### ABSTRACT

Both Bharati Mukherjee and Elif Shafak belong to the group of the most prolific and prominent female writers, whose works focus on the phenomenon of in-betweenness and liminality. The psychological and spatial dislocation and relocation lead their characters to be in a state of liminality, where their identities become fluid and ambiguous. Their works seem to apprise some of their own experiences as liminal beings, navigating between their native culture and foreign influences. The present paper attempts to portray the trajectory of female liminal personae in Elif Shafak's Honour and Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. The selected novels will be analyzed through the lens of Victor Turner's theory of liminality shedding some light on a spatio-temporal stage, and a state of in-betweenness and ambiguity through which the women characters of these novels pass. These works reflect the passage of life of the female characters while moving from pre-liminal to post-liminal phases, and the transformation they undergo while passing through the liminal spaces. Elif Shafak's Honour portrays the socio-psychological nature of liminality, and its impact on the life of the people undergoing the process of transition while moving from one stage of life to another. While Bharati Mukherjee's novel, Jasmine unravels the ordeals of an immigrant, Jasmine, whose life is a series of incarnations; a succession of different lives lived in a single life time; undergoing a sequence of transmutations, from Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase, to Jane before her final incorporation in USA.

**Keywords:** Liminality, In-betweenness, Ambiguity, Transmutation, Transformation, Betwixt and Between, Intermediary, Liminal personae

Literature always reflects the real world, and its influence on the human life has been strong enough to build an inevitable bond that produces transformational developments in their lives. This developmental process makes an individual pass through several situations and events contributing to the liminal existence of that individual impacting him either positively or negatively. The individual may either experience as being caught in the in-between phase, being in neither one nor the other position; or it may increase his potential to take a stand to come out of the liminal status. French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep in his seminal work *Les Rites de Passage* (1909) defined this in-between condition as 'liminal phase'. He describes that this phase is an indispensable attribute of any type of change (change in place, country or social status, change in age, etc.), where the individual acquires the experience of becoming completely obscure and uncertain about his real identity. Gennep employed the concept of 'Liminality' in his work to describe the middle transitional phase in a rite of passage, in which a person passes from one identity state to another. According to Van Gennep, this passage consists of three stages: 'pre-liminal' stage where an individual is separated from some fixed social or cultural structure; 'liminal' stage in which he is in an

intermediate, ambivalent social zone with ambiguous identity and the post-liminal stage where the 'liminar' reaches a new identity state and he is expected to adopt certain norms (1969: 43). Victor Turner isolated the middle stage out of the tripartite system proposed by Gennep and expanded liminality at the level of empirical application to make it more relevant to postmodern society. Though the term originated in socio-anthropology, it has gained importance in the study of literature. "Human experience is full of passage and liminal dimension. From the *Odyssey* to *Hamlet*, classical literature has always depended on plot lines with deep liminal elements." (Carson xxii)

The present study offers a new reading of Elif Shafak's novel *Honour* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* situating them within the context of liminality. Both the authors belong to the group of the most prolific and prominent female writers, whose works focus on the phenomenon of in-betweenness and liminality. Their own dislocation and relocation help them to delve into the psyche of the culturally uprooted people, who keep oscillating between the identities, cultures and value systems of their homeland and the adopted land. Their works seem to apprise some of their own experiences as liminal beings, navigating between their native culture and foreign influences. Novels of Bharati Mukherjee and Elif Shafak reflect the passage of life of the female characters while moving from pre-liminal to post-liminal phases, and the transformation they undergo while passing through the liminal spaces.

Elif Shafak's *Honour* portrays the socio-psychological nature of liminality and its impact on the life of the people undergoing the process of transition while moving from one stage of life to another. Stretching the setting of the novel from the Euphrates River to London, Shafak depicts the various in-between spaces for her characters through which they pass before their reincorporation into their final selves. While Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Jasmine* unravels the ordeals of an immigrant, Jasmine, whose life is a series of incarnations; a succession of different lives lived in a single life time; undergoing a sequence of transmutations, from Jyoti to Jasmine, to Jase, to Jane before her final incorporation in USA. Both these works bring out the experiences of the characters in those in-between periods and places that lead to their transformation before they finally get assimilated to the new culture or enter in new phase of their life. The focus is on the reconstruction practices when these characters are on the verge of change between two identity constructions bringing in the notion of 'betwixt and between' (1969: 95) developed by Turner. Liminality here is defined and applied as a site of uncertainty, ambiguity, change and unfulfillment between two states. The novels portray the characters oscillating between different nations and cultures, who, both confront and mediate the past and the present, the traditional and the modern while undergoing the transition of their identities passing through the liminal space and period. While emphasizing the potential of liminality for transformation, the question of identity of women characters in these novels is focused.

Elif Shafak, a British-Turkish writer, is a liminal figure who, with her Turkish name, her French birth, her journey through Spain, Turkey, Jordan and Germany, with her separated mother and maternal grandmother during the early years of her life, and with her interest in the Turkish Islamic world, is a woman in transition between different worlds. She often criticizes categorizations and does not believe in being anchored to any particular nation or place. She explains herself in her own words that she lacks sense of belonging to a particular country and culture rather, she: believe it's possible to have multiple, flowing belongings, instead of a singular, solid identity. I am an Istanbulite, for instance, and I am also a Londoner. I am from the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Balkans, Asia Minor, and from Europe. Inside my soul reside stories from the East and stories from the West, and I don't know exactly where the boundary lies. I feel attached to cultures, cities, peoples, always

plural. There is a strong local element in my novels, and at the same time, a strong global element. To me these things are not mutually exclusive. They can co-exist.

(Shafak *Writers as Public Intellectuals* 160)

As a cosmopolitan traveler, Shafak illustrates the different aspects of hybrid identities having multiple belongings, and various cultural connections in the post-modern age where there is an urge for the reassessment of any fixed boundaries in terms of nation, geography and culture.

Similarly, Bharati Mukherjee, an acclaimed Indian English novelist, believes in “fluid set of identities,” that broaden the horizons of an artist (Carter-Sanborn 580). She is an original voice at the cutting edge of American immigrant/multicultural literature. Her own struggle with identity first as an exile from India, then an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States has led to various dislocations resulting in her transition which we find in her novels. Unsure of her belongingness in this deterritorialised age, Mukherjee describes herself as:

A late-blooming colonial who writes in a borrowed language (English), lives permanently in an alien country [Canada at the time], and publishes in and is read, when read at all, in another alien country, the United States. (Carter-Sanborn 579)

She considers herself as “an immigrant, living in a continent of immigrants” (*Edwards* 11).

Both Shafak and Mukherjee believe in multiple attachments and multiple belongings. Their immigration to different nations and places whether temporarily or permanently has influenced them socially, politically and culturally, and its effects are manifested in their works. Their novels deal with the concept of multi nationalities, cultures and countries. They draw our attention to the liminal conditions of characters who have migrated from their native place owing to various reasons. In the process of moving from one social condition to another their characters frequently find themselves as the transitional beings who are in a state of ambiguity. Their state can also be related to the liminal ‘in-between’ state of the migrants who shift their location from the home country to the host country. They become liminal owing to their spatial existence and the gradual transitions in the cultural spheres of life. Though they are influenced by the culture of the host country and try to get adapted to it, but in reality, they exist neither as part of the cultural attributes of their home country nor that of the host country.

*Honour*, a story of Kurdish-Turkish family in London describes the journey of three generations of the Toprak family from Istanbul to the Euphrates and to London with the concept of ‘family honour’ as the common factor among all generations. The critics are of opinion that in this novel “Shafak turns what might seem a polemic against honor killing in lesser hands into a searing but empathetic and ultimately universal family tragedy” (*Kirkus Reviews*). Naze, the mother of the Protagonist Pembe Kader (*Pink Destiny*) and other seven daughters had an earnest desire to have a son. But the shock of birth of twin daughters instead of a son, numbs her and she loses her sanity. The incident pushes her into a liminal phase of anxiety and she decides to keep herself mute until Allah had explained, fully and convincingly. During the next forty days and forty nights she did not speak a word. (Shafak 11)

Naze’s intermediary phase consists of peacefulness and rebelliousness going side by side in her and leads to her transformation from a normal mother with love, care and affection for her family to a psychopath, a mad woman in her longing for a son. She passes through the transitory liminal state of interrogating God, “why he had given them two more daughters

when they already had six daughters, and still not a single son.” (ibid.) She reaches a state of another painful experience of conception and forced delivery and finally to a pathetic death. Finally, she reached at the zenith of her madness when:

Naze ordered [midwife] and then laughed, as if she had already crossed a threshold beyond which everything was a joke. ‘It’s a boy, don’t you see? My son is coming! You spiteful, jealous whore. Take a pair of scissors! Now! Cut my belly open and take my son out! (Shafak 24)

Naze’s transformation corresponds to what Gennep describes as pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal phases. It portrays the emotional and psychological dimensions of liminality and its impact on human behaviour. Thomasssen in his article, “The Uses and Meanings of Liminality” (2009), writes about the liminal experiences and permanent structures of lasting effects. In his book, *Liminality and the Modern* (2014), he proposes a descriptive model and a typology to identify various spatial and temporal dimensions of liminal situations. He claims that temporal dimension of liminality is related to moments, periods and epochs. Hence, the moment from the birth of twin daughters to death of Naze can be considered as a liminal phase in her life.

Pembe Kader and Jamila also pass through their rites of passage as liminal entities and undergo transformation. Pembe is shown as a bold character who loves to learn Turkish but couldn’t complete her studies because their society is against female education. On the other hand, Jamila is sober and contended with what she has received from destiny. She never questions God even when Adem, who has earlier proposed her for marriage, marries her sister Pembe for the sake of honour. She is rejected because years ago she had been kidnapped by the family of her elder sister Kamila’s suitor. Though returned safely, she is examined for her virginity. Upon learning this, Adem refuses to marry her. The incident makes a deep impact on Jamila’s psyche and she decides to remain unmarried throughout her life. She is uncertain and ambiguous about her status in the society and portrays a transitional character whom Turner calls, “betwixt and between’ all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification. Her state of being is beyond the normal social categories. She knows that and she, “...was not angry with her twin or with anyone else. And yet Jamila was also aware that the question had to be asked over and over, like a wound that needed to be dressed regularly.” (Shafak 38). She decides to stay in her homeland to become a mid-wife. Unlike her sister, who is more open to diversity and understandings, Jamila is reserved who refused to move to other place as she, “found big cities suffocating, and was daunted by the thought of unknown places – the buildings, the avenues, the crowds pressing on her chest, leaving her gasping for air.’ (Shafak 32). She passes through this liminal phase of transition as ‘limbo’ where her identity becomes ambiguous and obscure. Living alone during this middle stage of disorientation, she feels herself belonging to nowhere as she finds herself incapable of separating herself from previous cultural identity and unable to get assimilated to the new culture. She constantly remains in this state of in-between-ness and ambivalence with a new identity, “They called her KizEbe – the Virgin Midwife.” (Shafak 38). This condition of liminality, when it prolongs from its temporal behaviour into a permanent condition, is the situation of “permanent liminality” as explained by Victor Turner and further described by Arpad Szakolczai in his “Permanent (trickster) liminality: The reasons of the heart and the mind” as: “situations in which the temporary suspension of normality becomes permanent.”(231) She becomes popular in her village and from the girl who has been once rejected for her chastity, she is now sworn for her purity, ‘May she carry your name and be half as chaste as you,’ prayed the fathers of the girls she brought into this world.” (Shafak

39). This is how her identity is transformed while passing through rites of passage of her life. She has managed to survive on her own in the wilderness and transformed into a woman,

Who was no woman; a witch who paced the tight rope between two worlds . . .when Jamila was in the cellar, she stepped outside of her body, becoming a conduit for an arcane energy that coursed through the universe, healing mending and multiplying. (Shafak 173)

*Honour* deals with the complex state of in-betweenness experienced by immigrants in familial and extra-familial spheres with respect to their struggle for and against a new way of life that lies outside of their socio-cultural codes and norms. The novel presents the cultural ambiguity that the characters face due to their migration to an alien land. In London, where the Toprak family moves to is just a liminal space for them as they think, “We Topraks were only passers-by in this city – a half-Turkish, half-Kurdish family in the wrong end of London.” (Shafak 87) They donot have the feeling of belongingness for the place. Encountering a different culture, they seem to call into question the very existence of the collectivities referred to as 'community' or 'society'. They all perceive and respond to this ambiguity differently.

Esma, Pembe’s daughter, compares London and Istanbul as, “If London was a confection, it would be a butterscotch toffee – rich, intense and traditional. Istanbul, however, would be a chewy black-cherry liquorice – a mixture of conflicting tastes, capable of turning the sour into sweet and the sweet into sour” (Shafak 152). The normative cultural ambiguity that they face is exacerbated by the adaptation to a new culture. They adapt to the challenge of growing up as Turkish Kurds in a foreign city in a different way and the resistance they show to deal with the situation also varies. Iskender (Pembe’s elder son) born in Turkey is unable to accept the foreign land and adjust to western culture and its norms. With the passage of time, Iskender finds that there is no meaningful way for them to assimilate neither with each other nor with London. “Nobody meddled in his life. He came home at irregular hours, left whenever he pleased, and seemed to owe no one an explanation” (Shafak 214). Yunus (Pembe’s younger son) wiser and practical and is ready to adopt it whereas Esma who loves words and languages tries to keep peace in her family, wants to change herself accordingly without leaving her past.

Pembe, the protagonist, experiences both the psychological as well as spatio-temporal attributes of liminality. She enters the liminal phase when she moves to London, after her marriage with Adem, who never loved her as their marriage was just a compromise. She has a split identity, divided between two homes, one in London and the other in her Kurdish village. Pembe’s phase of liminality and transitional dynamics takes her to the threshold of losing her core identity in search of a new identity. As a prey of the honour codes of the patriarchal society, she is always under the criticism of the male dominated society. When her husband Adem starts gambling and leaves her to live with his mistress Roxana, her status in the society become uncertain. Pembe becomes confused when she realizes that she has to manage her family without the protection of her husband. She takes a job to earn for her family, but has to leave it to protect her honour on being molested by her master’s husband. She is blamed by the society for this condition. Tariq (Adem’s elder brother) says, “what do you expect, if she’s not woman enough to keep her husband home...” (Shafak 153) At this stage of her life when she has three children, and her husband has left her for another woman, she finds herself on the verge of a limit where she belongs to, “neither here nor there.... betwixt and between the position assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial.” (Turner 1969: 95)

Turner analyses liminality as a useful tool in theorizing the reaction of humans when exposed to these liminal and extra-ordinary experiences. After leaving previous job, Pembe starts working in a salon, where she meets Elias, a Greek chef, who, like Pembe, “thought of himself as a man living on the shores of other cultures” (Shafak 277). But he differed from them in a fundamental way as he was capable of surviving anywhere, as he has no attachment to any particular piece of land. Turner in his calls such relationships as ‘Communitas’ which signifies any collective experience in which people distance themselves from social structures and their identities and may attain a sense of equality. (1969: 44) The affiliation of Pembe and Elias provides each other the peace and support they were longing for as their love was above sex and immorality, “A friendly exchange. Nothing else.” (Shafak 131) The chasteness of their relationship offers a transition in their identities as they pass through the liminal period of friendship. Elias silently finds the quality he has been looking for in his companion and Pembe fearfully tastes the true essence of love which she never found with Adem. She discloses this secret relation to her sister Jamila who comes to visit her in London. She is surprised to see the changed behaviour of her sister, “Pembe couldn’t help but feel a sense of bliss. Her sister’s presence had renewed her faith in life and given her fresh hope.” (Shafak 296) As Genep suggested that a liminal persona comes out of the state of liminality as a changed person to be incorporated with a new or updated status, Pembe thinks that, “Things would be different from now on. Pembe didn’t know how, but she trusted that it would be so” (ibid.). In these transitory moments she imagines life with Elias and her children together living happily, but her transformative identity is short-lived. Her son Iskender finds himself unable to accept her affair with Elias as he is already under the impact of patriarchal influence to protect the family honour. So, he attempts to kill her, but unknowingly murders his aunt Jamila thinking her to be his mother Pembe, as both were identical twins. The incident gives a shock to Pembe who couldn’t believe that, “Her sultan, her lion, the apple of her eye” (Shafak 337) could do this. Finally, Pembe meets her death in the village not long after Jamila’s murder as a transformed person as Genep says that liminality always dissolves the existing structures to create more stable ones.

Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine*, is the story of “unhousement and rehousement” (Edwards 26) of a young widow Jasmine, who uproots herself from India and re-roots herself in America, in search of a new life. While switching from one geographical location to another, she keeps redrawing the boundaries of the self, endlessly constructing and reconstructing herself. Migrating from one place to another; she continually transforms herself into new roles fleeing the pieces of her past in order to prepare herself to get assimilated into a new culture and it is essential outcome of liminality according to Turner. Bharati Mukherjee opines that the immigrants live in two worlds: “Nothing was rooted anymore ... Everything was in motion” (Mukherjee 152). Though Jasmine has learnt to be independent and self-reliant yet she feels to be suspended between the worlds “... Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities” (Mukherjee 77). Towards the end of the novel, after living through various identities as Jasmine, Jyoti, Jazz, and Jane she feels: “Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud” (Mukherjee 241). Her true identity remains uncertain and ambiguous till she finally decides to metamorphose herself in to a true American in her post-liminal stage.

Regardless of her rural background the protagonist, Jasmine exhibits a resilience that is capable of accepting and adapting to the cultural divergences. To escape from being suspended in the in-between status, she earnestly attempts to make herself an American, very much like her creator. The novel voices Mukherjee’s philosophy of adaptation in post-colonial western world as a strategy of escaping the liminal phase. In *Jasmine*, Bharati

Mukherjee has carved out an assimilation of third world immigrants into the American melting pot to avoid being stuck in the intermediate phase of belonging to 'neither here nor there'. Mukherjee's *Jasmine* depicts the optimistic outcome of liminality and its positive impact on an individual's hopeful journey from home country to host country. Jasmine attempts to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits yet retaining her innate Indianness in certain matters. She always keeps moving on in life, leaving the past behind, never attempts to go back to her previous life conveying the fact that there is no going back to the pre-liminal stage, the only possibility lies in moving forward through the liminal phase of life in order to find ways to move out of it to the post-liminal phase. Jasmine's inner monologues and silent reflections capture her deliberation on cultural differences and an immigrant women's emotional adherence to her traditional beliefs while intellectually exploring new avenues opened to her by modern value systems. Though Jasmine gets assimilated wherever she goes and acquires new identities but sometimes a sense of rootlessness dogs her. Meena Alexander opines, "Confrontation with another society starts the process of destructing and reconstructing the self" (61). An immigrant has to imbibe the host culture, leaving behind his native one and undergo a massive transformation from their former selves in their native country into different newer selves in the host country as going back to a normal life wouldn't happen in the real world. As liminality could be positive and negative (Turner 201) according to its nature of existence, post-truth can also act as a tool to progress or destruction at the same time. Turner relates situations of outsiderhood and structural inferiority as a part of the betwixt and between state of liminality (1974: 231). The liminal personae therefore, can even change their names to the ones that sound less foreign and avoid the image of exotic, distant country. In *Jasmine* too, Jyoti keep changing her names to get merged in adopted society

She takes several births and undergoes numerous conversions during her journey of life in America, often experiences a deep sense of alienation resulting in an uncertain identity. After leaving her native land, India, Jyoti attempts her best to get adapted in the host society and culture as an "immigrant". But "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams" (Mukherjee 29). The lives of immigrants like Jasmine do not have "straight line and smooth plains" they live centuries of history in a life time and have several lives and roles. *Jasmine* is a story of rebirth and recreation where we find a willingness to break away from the past. Gennep explains this separation from the past as the onset of the liminal rites (rites of transition) where an individual is on the threshold of encounter with a new status. (11) At this stage an individual is temporarily stripped of the past privileges before getting consummated by the new ones.

Jasmine's life brings forth the truth that an immigrant's life is a series of incarnations. Jasmine's voyage to California through Florida, New York, Iowa, depicts her transitional phase. An important aspect of the liminal phase is that it has the potential to make a person, decide to take a stand to end his/her liminal status. While taking such a strategic stand, the individual moves out of his/her liminal status to the post-liminal phase. Jasmine alias Jyoti also experiences the same. Born in a feudal village of Punjab, being fifth daughter and seventh of nine children of her parents, she is a dowry less undesirable female child, a curse for parents but this does not shatter her dreams and desires. She remains bold, intelligent and a non-conformist who doesn't believe in prevalent conviction that village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they go." (Mukherjee 46) Her marriage with Prakash in a court of law rather than with a widower selected by her grandmother reflects her rebellious nature. She questions the prophecies of the astrologer about her "widowhood and

exile” in the harshest terms: “You are a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds!” After marriage, the cursed and jinxed village girl gets a new identity and becomes Jasmine, the wife of a modern man, Prakash, who “gave me a new name: Jasmine. (Mukherjee 77) This christening means much to her as she got a new identity and entered a new phase of her life. Victor Turner introduced his concept of ‘anti-structure’ as part of his perspective of liminality to denote both liminality and communitas. He did not refer to a structural reversal, but meant about “the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc. from the normative constraints” (1982: 44). At this stage of her life, Jasmine begins experiencing liminality which can be identified as being anti-structural – which challenges the existing and established structures prior to their liminal phase.

When Prakash falls prey to Khalsa terrorists on the very eve of his departure to America for further studies, Jasmine is left heartbroken and alone. But being a born fighter, she doesn’t allow this heart-rending tragedy to deter her courage. She decides to fulfill her husband, Prakash’s dream by burning Prakash’s suit on the campus of Florida Institute, where he was planning to go for studies. Her decision leaves her family aghast and they wonder “a village girl, going alone to America without job, husband or papers?” (97). Her decision moves her into a state of uncertainty and transition. Jewkes refers to this state of liminality as, “The states of being or states of mind, as well as physical spaces, as we pass from a period of stability to one of ambiguity or undergo some kind of transformation” (Jewkes 376). She leaves for America on forged papers without knowing what future holds in store for her. Her entry into U.S is fraught with dangers and pitfalls, and she is going to face the uncertainties of life in an unknown country. “The passage through the liminal environment signifies uncertainty, vulnerability, chaos and danger because customary rules are upturned and normal codes of activity or behaviour are suspended” (Jewkes 375).

While explaining the ambiguity of liminal phase, Victor Turner notes that at this in-between stage the liminal personae spend time in interstructural period where they are given new names to denote their “no longer/not yet” status. Jyoti renamed as Jasmine by her husband begins her liminal state where she dissents the norms and rules of her previous society and enters into the inter-structural phase as discussed by Turner as ‘anti-structure’. Jasmine’s first encounter with America is a kind of regeneration through violence. After murdering the Half-Face, who raped her, she experiences a life affirming transformation and starts afresh; walking empty handed into the highway, she is picked by kind-hearted Lillian Gordon, who rescues her from starvation and misery. Under Gordon’s care, Jasmine undergoes transformation; she abandons her Hasnapuri clothes and modesty, and learns to adapt herself to the new environment. Her second transformation takes place in Taylor’s household, where she becomes a care giver and Day-Mummy to Duff, and later fits easily into the vacant slot left by Wylie in Taylor’s life. But on being recognized by Sukhi- her husband’s assassin, she runs away, moves to Iowa, befriends Darrel and even carries Bud’s child without being married to him and then again moves Westward with Taylor, in search of an adventurous future in California.

Jasmine undergoes a series of transmutations, leaving her old self behind, she attempts to forge a new American identity. Though Jasmine outwardly responds very promptly to the behavioral patterns of the American society, instantly inculcates it in herself to become Americanized. However, her innate Indianness still persists and she experiences the cultural shock. This fact of strangeness always surprises her. For her the fact that Duff is the adopted child is shocking “I could not imagine a non-genetic child.” (Mukherjee 170) and Wylie’s decision to leave Taylor in search of real happiness is also astonishing for Jasmine. She feels defeated: “America has thrown me again... [she couldn’t understand], what Wylie was

saying or why she had done it.” (Mukherjee 181-82) Separated from the emotional and spiritual tenor of the country that has been once her own, Jasmine as liminal personae shuttles between different identities.

The examination of the novel from the perspective of the insights shared in the theory of liminality and transition helps to find that the experience of Jasmine in America by being in the state of uncertainty reveals the presence of dual liminality. Even while living with an American husband in an American household, her ideal is an Indian wife, who is by nature self-sacrificing because culturally she still identifies with her native land. At Iowa with Bud, she acted like an Indian wife, who exults in loyalty towards her husband and identifies all her dreams and wishes with him, sacrificing all her individuality at the holy shrine of matrimony.

Jasmine abhors artificially maintained Indianness and finds it difficult to cope with the artificial Indian environment created at Flushing which appears to be like a neighbourhood of Jalandhar. She makes no special efforts to keep in touch with Indians. She attempts to break free from past but as Hall says, “the past continues to speak to us”; it is “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (Hall 226). She tries to drive out the ghosts of past but “in the white lamplight, ghosts float toward me. Jane, Jasmine, Jyoti” (Mukherjee 27) Unable to get rid of “the ghosts of her past or completely murder her Indian self; she becomes a mosaic of selves” (Hazenson 25). She keeps oscillating between the two cultures, old and new, and realizes, “Jyoti of Hasanapur was not Jasmine, Duff’s Day mummy and Taylor and Wyllie’s aupair in Manhattan; that Jasmine isn’t this Jane Ripplemeyer...” (Mukherjee 127) Every name of Jasmine denotes a different self. Jasmine remains ‘in-between’ two distinct universes, the native and the adopted one.

Finally, in her post-liminal stage, Jasmine realizes the truth that in order to survive it is necessary to achieve a fusion without which an immigrant tends to stand apart and alone. Jasmine is capable of dwelling in a universe where persons exist not as a unified individual but as many, not bound by any borders rather having infinite possibilities of inventing. In Jasmine turned Jase, there is willed blending of two cultures, and the result is a variant which can neither be identified with margin nor center. Jasmine “changed because I [she] wanted to”. For her “the tug of opposing forces” is thrilling and she learns to “live with both impulses” (Mukherjee 180). Constant changes make Jasmine a “perpetual nomad and hybrid in the most radical sense; she shuttles between differing identities” (Nelson 77). Towards the end of novel when she finds herself caught between promise of America and old-world dutifulness” (Mukherjee 132), she ultimately decides to go to California with Taylor leaving Bud behind to liberate herself from duty and gets assimilated in America as a new woman. In the novel, the experiences of Jasmine with various identities during her passage of life are interconnected with each other as the liminality in all these identities influences to continue her liminal status and also ultimately ends it to move to her post-liminal phases.

The life of the women characters of Shafak’s *Honour* and Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* confirms to the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal phases as elaborated by Arnold van Gennep in his *The Rites of Passage*. In this paper main focus has been on the intermediary or the liminal phase of these characters as per the insights provided by Victor Turner on the intermediary phase of liminality. Pembe and Jasmine, the protagonists of *Honour* and *Jasmine* respectively, leave their native places and move to the different host countries. Both originally belonged to conservative society but Jasmine is able to extricate herself from her past while passing through the liminal phase, and finally enter in the post-liminal phase at the end, when she decides to go to California with Taylor leaving the Bud behind. While Pembe escapes her liminal phase by moving back to her village in Turkey replacing her twin sister as

a new woman after her son Iskender killed Jamila. She re-emerges into same social structure as a transformed person which Genep defined as 'post-liminal rites' (11). Naze and Jamila also in their rites of passage experience the psychological transitions during their liminal phases and meet their deaths differently due to the patriarchal pressures prevalent in the society.

The detailed analysis of four women characters Pembe, Jamila and their mother Naze, and Jasmine brings to fore the transitional trajectory of the female characters of the Shafak's *Honour* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, portraying their experiences during their transitions with reference to the intermediary state so as to find better solutions to overcome the entrapment of liminality. All the above discussed characters validate the notion of Turner's 'betwixt and between' which led to their transitions and transformations. The paper brings out the changes occurring to the spatial and situational existence of these characters, and highlights the fact that these transitions and liminal experiences, whether naturally occurring or coercive in its attributes, are inevitable. Thus, both *Honour* and *Jasmine* describe the archetypal journey of Naze, Pembe, Jamila and Jasmine crossing the threshold from known to unknown, from life to death passing through the socio-cultural liminal space of uncertainty.

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