



SUBJUGATION AND EMANCIPATION OF WOMAN IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI: A STUDY

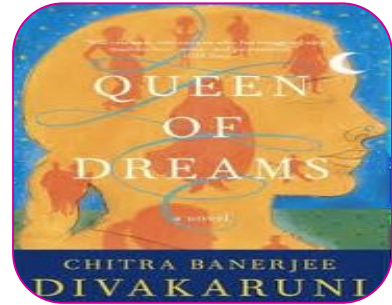
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ABSTRACT

As women's first major contribution with men was in the struggle for freedom of India, women emancipation had no elements of man-woman antagonism which overwhelmed women's movements in the West. Emancipation does not mean the liberty to do what one please. It is movement to obtain self-respect and dignity. Chitra Banerjee in her selected novels like *Arrange Marriage*, *Sister of My Heart*, *The Mistress of Spices*, *Queen of Dreams* and *The Vine of Desire* has renovated marginal women into new icons of independence and substantiate that women are proficient of restructuring the community. She proposes two advantages of Women's Liberation. First, she allows them to realise their potential as individuals in their society. Second, she asserts that it is the only way by which they could achieve personal recognition and identity. Hence she prefers to identify herself as a 'womanist' writer and her writings are assessments of the female identity in India and in America.



KEYWORDS : *Subjugation, Liberation, Identity Crisis, Love, Patience, Sacrifice, Reticence.*

INTRODUCTION

She may be an Asian American, she may be an expatriate Indian, but chiefly, she is an Indian woman who discovers the meaning of life through her fiction in the way that the Indian woman lives. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's fiction exudes the various dimensions and shades of the existence of woman in male dominated society. Indian society sanctions little freedom to woman and she is expected to design the dreams of her life only in accordance to the paradigms fixed by the norms of patriarchy.

Divakaruni uses her stories for the empowerment of the women and encourage them to be their own selves. She tries to depict the problems and issues faced by a woman in this male dominated society and her devastation at the altar of marriage. Characters like Mrs. Majumdar in *Sister of My Heart*, the mistress in "The Maid Servant's Story" and the mother in "The Bats" dare not fight for freedom for the world not know how to survive alone. Lalitha in "The Mistress of Spices" reflects the lives of suffocated women in search of a refuge from suffering. Tiloin *The Mistress of Spices* in spite of her identity as the 'mistress of spices' unveils a greater empathy for Indian immigrant women because she has a realization that a woman have to suffer unceasingly in face of adverse social conditions.

Divakaruni has touched different facets of an urban woman's life and her plight. She designates the lives of characters who struggle against a society to discovered freedom. Abha and Meena "Affair", the nameless protagonist of the disappearance, Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*, Geetha and Lalita in *The Mistress of Spices* are repeatedly suppressed by male domination. In *Pallace of Illusions*, she ventures to expose the annals of female subjugation with Draupadi as the chief narrator. These

women liberate themselves to confront established erections and cultural practices that have subjected them to patriarchal dominance.

PLIGHT OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Divakaruni through her novels creates the world of immigrant's experiences and epitomizes the plight of Indian immigrant women. The emotional identification and assertion of self-anguish through their conflicts afford a rare legitimacy to her narrative presentations. The selected works provide themselves to a study of individuals who struggle due to the conflicts in relationships or cultural traditions. The protagonists try to establish their individual identities in a new locale, while undergoing a sense of displacement, alienation, and isolation. Martial conflict rises as two individuals try to familiarise to the unacquainted and new culture. Problems arise in their relationship because of their misapprehension and the new ethnic environment. It idiosyncratically justifies that Indian woman can't emancipate herself from the bonds of familial relationship because Indian women fosters the values of love, patience, sacrifice and reticence.

Divakaruni's characters are subtle and respond truly to the necessities of the self which could not have been possible if they are in India. On the other, America serves as a land of liberty, potential and self-realization where man-woman relationships are based on communal and equal partnership. Her characters observe the problems of human relationship and interconnectedness between people.

The entire poetics of female experiences, subjugations and desires have come in the form of brilliant creation of Palace of Illusions, Draupadi the emblem of Indian womanhood is projected not as a silent spectator but as a self-aware human being resisting exposing and protecting the voices of their oppressors. In Palace of Illusions, Draupadi has become a living image and vibrant voice of the suppression of womanhood.

Divakaruni has taken a male-centered story and breathed new life into its female characters, giving us a rich tale of passion and love, power and weakness, honour and humiliation ... entertaining, insightful and suspenseful. (The Unions)

Paradigms of Man and Women Relationship

The novelist brings out the elusive tinges of the male characters. There is hiatus between the man's expectations that the woman should be 'modern', whatever that means, and patriarchal dominance. Divakaruni candidly portrays the women characters that are seen suffering from a sense of existential problems and passions. Women in her works are hypersensitive, solitary and helpless. They always show their mettle and possess all the virtues of a great character. But unfortunately, they are denigrated, isolated and tormented by the patriarchal domination.

Divakaruni in her debut collection Arranged Marriage, invents a fine fabric of the shifting paradigms of man and women relationship emerging out of the phenomenon of globalization, emergence of hybrid culture and the involvement of women in the corporate life. The idea of marriage based on "mutual respect" is an embodiment of the new possibilities of man and woman relationship. However in the story "Affairs", she defends the cause of alternative relationship to avoid the monotony and dullness of traditional marriages. Divakaruni gives space to her women to speak on the absurdities adopted by their husbands who adopt their wives as their private property. Meena, the protagonist of the story "Affairs" makes a candid confession,

I wondered how many women were lying sleepless like me through the night dark, eyes burning from tears that wouldn't come, because their husbands were having affairs with their best friends. (Arranged: 265)

The study of Divakaruni's novels reveals that human relationship is passing through a conflict in roles and values, and truly presents the decaying face of human relationship as evident in the modern world. Divakaruni calls 'sisterhood' as women's friendship, not of sisterly bonding. They overcome all the critical and difficult circumstances because of their co-ordination, co-operation and mutual understanding. She has

a private vision as she constantly makes her characters confront with the task of defining themselves and their role as woman in a family and outside the family circle.

Divakaruni's work flaunts the romanticism of female body captured in the close-up of rituals and ceremonies from birth to death, constantly brutalized by greed and patriarchal power. (Lata: 22)

CONCLUSION

Divakaruni delineates modern Indian women's emancipation from the male dominated society. Her depiction of feministic atmosphere is assign of women's self-upliftment for their enlightened growth and progress. Her protagonists are generally rebellious in nature and they learn how to confront the harsh realities of life. Each character rises to the occasion by affirming her individuality, choosing to live her own life and overcoming strange and difficult circumstances and finally emerges as a defier. They make the best of what they can of their life. When they have a chance, they struggle and discover happiness rather than stagnate under male suppression.

Thus the female protagonists of Divakaruni are not the depictions of traditional images. They are the 'new woman' who could be equated with the flooding rivers that find a pathway into crevices and holes. The act of confrontation gives them the courage to decide things for themselves and increasingly lead them to a positivistic dispassion from life. With a clear vision and careful contemplation, they understand that a brave new world is waiting for them and that bold decisions have to be made by them to reach that new universe.

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