



RIFT AND REDEMPTION OF LOVE IN DIVAKARUNI'S *SISTER OF MY HEART* AND *THE VINE OF DESIRE*: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT :

Chitra Divakaruni's, *Sister of My Heart* is a sensible treatment of the relationship between two cousins. The author returns to the lives of Sudha and Anju in *The Vine of Desire*, the spin-off of *Sister of My Heart*. In this novel, Sudha comes to live with Anju in the wake of abandoning her damaging spouse. The author's expressive depictions of the characters' inner and outer worlds convey a rich enthusiastic upheaval to an ennobling anecdote about the two women. Anju and Sudha fathom the way to decide on harmony with the hard choices and conditions that are forced upon them. The novelist through her characters Anju and Sudha has created another enabling age for women. The diversity of women and the diversity within each woman are portrayed through Anju and Sudha. The novelist portrays her women through their lives, encountering their desire, misfortune, melancholy, shock and prolonged separation, and realizes that these fights and triumphs have a general string with which women of many cultures is effectively distinguished.

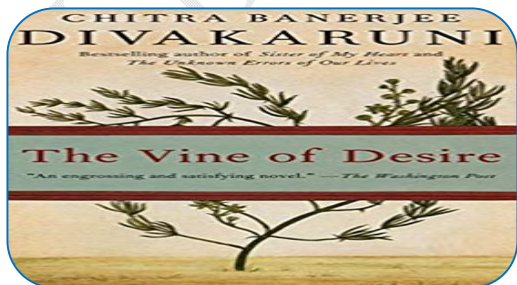
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INTRODUCTION

In *The Vine of Desire*, a sequel to *Sister of My Heart*, Chitra Divakaruni discovers the self-analysis and revelation of the relationship between Anju and Sudha. It also reveals their sturdy emotion; jealousy and redemption. Anju, initially, it appeared as a discouraged woman once the miscarriage of her son. The unhappy impacts are obviously drawn by the novelist. In *Sister of My Heart* Chitra Divakaruni symbolizes the real love through her characters Anju and Sudha. Whereas in *The Vine of Desire*, she pictures the passionate encounter which causes the destruction of Anju and Sunil's marriage, a rift between the cousins and also the flight of Sunil to life, of a solitary man in another city.

CRACK AMONGST THE COUSINS

In *The Vine of Desire*, Anju and Sudha constantly fight and overcome the predominance of male. Both the protagonists have for one reason and the other lost the support of their husbands. Life is not a bed of rose petals for any of them. They pass on the message that, the circumstances determine women's psychology. There are so many incidents that expose the rift between the cousins. For instance, when Sudha says something about Mangala, one among the neighbors in Calcutta, Anju asks her dubiously whether she is sure or she gets things mixed up with a movie or maybe a story from the mystery magazines. Sudha feels angry and is frightened to realize how far they have moved far from one another.



"Even their memories are marooned on separate islands" (p. 156).

Chitra Divakaruni presents a distinct story of Mangala to measure the extent of affection between Anju and Sudha. She also wants to point out the treatment of love between a poor girl and a rich boy in India. If a poor girl loves a rich boy surely that will pave way for the devastation of that girl. This is what exists mostly in India and not in other countries, particularly in America. But Anju says in America too there are loads of comparable happenings of no money and no rights rules. Anyhow, the very idea of Anju gradually distancing herself from Sudha makes her sleepless and to imagine how dead people might spend their nights. When Anju asks her what she is thinking of, Sudha outwardly says nothing, but feels, "how could I bear to tell her that the reason I long connection with the dead is that she's gone from me" (p. 157).

"Bidding farewell to the marriage plot, Divakaruni fashions two alternative destinies for the cousins who had been brought up to believe in the primacy of marriage in their lives as women" opines Lopamotra Basu in a **New York Doubleday Magazine**. Sunil pours out his emotions to Sudha. He expresses his denunciation of her relationship with Lalit. Sunil says, that he does not love Anju and he reveals to Sudha in the following lines,

But what I felt toward you from the day I came to the bride-viewing for Anju in the Chatterjee house - I'll be honest. I'm not sure if that's what people call love. But it's the closest thing to it that I've known (p. 193).

Even before the lapse, Anju and Sunil have dissociated away from each other. If their son has been born alive, somehow they might have managed the situation. But their child's death leaves a wall of ice between them. It is only at this time that Sudha arrives in America. Until her arrival Sunil is half-alive. Subsequently, Sunil gains strength on her visit to America and decides to confide in her the love he has for her. Sunil is even ready to apply for a divorce. He pleads, "Sudha will you marry me?" (p. 194).

Sunil's attraction for Sudha and a chance he got unfortunately to find her alone at home leads time to exploit her sexually. The sexual harassment deeply affects Sudha's life. She remembers the humiliating experience frequently. Helplessness of Indian immigrant woman encourages men like Sunil to exploit them, and the same helpless state forces women to suffer inaudibly. It is a woman who suffers and the main culprit, the man enjoys remains far from the brunt of the consequences.

Symbolizing the real love

Sudha is not at all happy concerning Sunil's decision. To convince her Sunil perceives, You're feeling guilty. Please don't because whatever you choose to do, I'm going through with the divorce. The break down of our marriage began long before you came to America. It has no connection with what I feel for you (p. 195).

Sudha never wants to betray Anju who is her friend, cousin, and sister. When Sunil asks her to offer her love, she solely remembers the yellow rose which symbolizes friendship. In Sudha's belief Sunil seems to be a friend. She says,

In his loyalty and kindness, his attempts to hold on to honor, Sunil would have made a good friend. I say a quick, silent prayer: this life time is lost to us, but in a future incarnation, may we be blessed by such a bond. If such a thing is possible between men and women. To guide, warn and console each other. To love each other in that other, better way (p. 196).

But she succumbs to the decision of her heart. She has deceived Anju's trust reclined in her. She desires to be independent; she wants to be desired; she wants to be true to herself and others, but she is unable even to be true to her own daughter or Anju or Ashok or Lalit or Sunil or to the prestige of the Chatterjees.

Sudha decides to depart Anju alone because she had come to America in order to make Anju's life comfortable: but now that complete she has done is to interrupt it more. So she decides to depart them and eventually finds a job as a caretaker. She endeavors to claim herself and act independently. She also thanks Anju for giving her an opportunity to induce far from the issues which suffocate her in India. She also confides in the letter that only because of Anju, Sudha has viewed a better perspective on her life. She regrets to take Dayita far from her. But whatever it may be, wherever she goes, her love for Anju will be the same as ever. She says, "We haven't been too good about talking to each other recently. But I love you Anju. I'm still your sister. That'll never change" (p. 203). Pure love can never be allied with selfishness. In the letter to Sunil, Sudha clearly explicates she will always be his wife's sister and nothing more than that to him.

Sudha faces the terrible loneliness in America. She knows in her loneliness that could be dangerous. So, to avoid the loneliness Sudha often talks to Dayita and involves herself into her all the time. Sudha often works at home to keep herself busy. Sudha bluntly accepts that it is her loneliness that creates a space for another man in her life. She says: "He had cupped his hands for me, so I may pour all my loneliness into them. (p. 228) It is her loneliness that forces her to give in to the desires. Anju and Sudha face the loneliness. Both of them have shown intense desire to be autonomous human beings by rejecting help from others.

Emerging as an independent woman

By leaving them, Sudha emerges as a woman of individual strength. She displays her own strength of mind, which is extraordinary for a woman of Indian origin. Amongst the various intricacies that challenge her, she grabs the chance to search for a job. She tries to create progress in her own way. Sudha wants to lead a better life without depending on others because she does not wish others to speak unwell of her daughter Dayita in her later years. She resides just for the sake of her daughter and not for any worldly pleasures. She even sacrifices her marriage life as she has to protect her daughter. She is very fond of her daughter and she is more than anything else in the world. Even Anju, who is the sister of her heart once, occupies the next place and Dayita becomes the daughter of her heart, mind and even soul as Sudha has given up all her personal desires for her daughter's sake.

When Sudha receives a caring letter from Ashok, her past love, she tears the letter into pieces as she never wants to rely on others to bring up her daughter. In spite of the fact that safety cannot be attained so easily, she accepts it in her own way, "The past is past" (p. 97). Sudha is so affectionate of her daughter in such a way that she is unable to disclose even her own desires. She tears the letter of Ashok due to her greatest affection for Dayita, but she longs to go back to India as Ashok wishes. She controls her desire and expresses, I can't go back to India, to the way I was. Helpless, dependent. I can't live like that. I can't bring up my daughter to think that is how a woman needs to live (p. 104).

Sudha had come to America with big dreams, but she ends up doing odd jobs there and is dissatisfied with her existence in America. She had come to America after defying the tradition of arranged marriage at the cost of ostracism, isolation and intense loneliness. She stays there at her cousin's apartment, which is terminated by her emotional attachment with Sunil, her cousin's husband.

Anju feels cheated by her husband and leaves him with an intention of leading a free and independent life. Later on his regret his infidelity and makes efforts to patch-up with her. But she remains unrelenting. Thus, both Anju and Sudha are separated from their husbands through the reasons are different. The separation affects both the protagonists in different manners which indicate that Indian women respond to the moments of crisis in different ways. It takes a long time for Sudha to survive. However, Anju manages to survive early and she prepares herself firmly for future. Anju's early survival is an outcome of American influence over her. Anju is teased by the situation and troubled by her own people. But unlike the faint-hearted Indian women, she decides to show her solitary. She wants to shows that she is

able to withstand in this world without any manly support. This is a great achievement on the part of a woman like Anju who comes from the country where women are left to undergo suffering.

Belonging to India, Anju and Sudha share certain common cultural traits. They are definitely conditioned by their Indian upbringing but have risen above their traditional constraint. Their domicile in America has widened their mental horizons. Divakaruni celebrates female independence by creating characters like Anju and Sudha. But at the same time, she makes it clear that this freedom and independence cost much to these women. It could only be achieved through pains and sufferings.

Finally, Sudha leaves Anju's apartment which is really a bold decision on the part of an Indian diasporic woman. Who has recently migrated, and is extremely alone with a responsibility of a child. Lalit, an Indian doctor in America, proposes Sudha to marry, by the time she leaves Anju's apartment. Lalit's proposal was able to set everything right, Sunil's longing for her, the financial troubles, and hateful glances of Mr. Sen's at whom she works as a caretaker. Everything would have vanished if she accepts his proposal. However, she refuses him because she wants more out of life. Sudha firmly steps forwards to the freedom, independence and autonomous existence.

REDEMPTION OF LOVE

Lalit is somewhat a man who likes to change everybody happy specifically Sudha. When at first Sudha meets him in the party; she finds an amendment with herself. Sudha's relationship with Lalit, a well-wisher of Sudha in America, is depicted by the novelist in a subtle manner. Sudha initiates herself by telling everything about her. He is moved to hear the bitter experience she has come across in her life. Lalit is very much agonizes when he comes to know that Sudha has left the house with Dayita without revealing her whereabouts. He feels mitigated whereas Sudha calls him through the phone. He expresses his anger and concern by putting so many queries and shouts at Sudha, "Where the hell are you" Are you okay? How's Dayita? I've been out of mind with worry" (p. 260). He also comforts her that he is there to take care of her in all her troubles. He is happy that at least she trusts him enough to call him to meet her on Sunday at Myra's house.

Lalit loves Sudha very much and for her sake, he meets Anju at the university. He makes Anju realize how Sudha repents a lot for leaving her alone and that too for Anju's peaceful life. He asserts that Sudha at least wants to speak on her own side. He even asks Anju to write a letter or to ring Sudha. Finally, he stimulates Anju's in-depth feeling of love towards Sudha and expresses therefore, "I too love her too much. I think I just rediscovered that" (p. 324).

Sudha decides to go to India with the old man and so wants to bid farewell to Anju. Anju and Sudha meet together after a period of long separation. Her apologies to Anju for whatever has happened. Both sit like strangers and only after a long time they share their feelings of separation. When Sudha defends her abandonment, Anju stops her in a very firm voice, "It took me a long time to close the door. Don't start opening it again" (p. 363).

Anju and Sudha realize that they both can never hate each other. There are quite a lot of changes happening in their life which surely alters the entire position of them. Anju brings Sudha to that place only to make her remember everything and she pulls Sudha's hand and asks her "Come on! Hurry! The two of them break into a run, heading for the landing area at the edge of a gift" (p. 368).

CONCLUSION

The Vine of Desire deals with the experiences of Diasporic women. Anju and Sudha turn out to be women who adopt a defiant stand and do not return to their husbands, or even to the men who love them. They are desirous to survive independently, unaccompanied by the male influence. Anju cannot forget and forgive the infidelity of her husband and Sudha does not want to be a prisoner at the hands of men who apparently wish to come to her aid, however would finally exercise complete control over her she would rather bring up her daughter alone according to her own needs.

In **Sister of My Heart** Chitra Divakaruni portrays the intimacy between Sudha and Anju through two stars in the sky before dawn, but in **The Vine of Desire**, Sudha herself modifies the relation of the same couple of stars between Sudha and her daughter Dayita. She acknowledges life is not a bed of roses; it is a blend of happiness and sorrows, with incomprehensible losses and unbelievable gains. The real love for one's own children affords its own safeguard and a dominant influence from within. Pure love can never be associated with selfishness. Good relationships are one of the essential needs to lead a cheerful and peaceful life. They are not simply enjoyable but give life a new meaning.

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