



PATTERN OF DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY IN CHITRA BANERJEE'S - 'ARRANGED MARRIAGE'

REVATHI S

PG Student,

JyotiNivas College (Autonomous),

Bangalore University,

Koramangala, Bengaluru

revathipraveen.cbe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Indian-American author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning. Her themes include the Indian experience, contemporary America and immigration. Arranged marriage, Divakaruni's first collection of short stories was published to great critical acclaim. Diaspora refers the scattering of a people from their homeland. The Diasporic sensibility is not something permanent, it changes. Diaspora leads one towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and defining oneself. It depicts migrant experiences of woman and how they struggled in the crisis of exile/displacement and problems related to their identity. Divakaruni's award-winning poetry fuses here with prose for the first time to engender eleven indelible portraits of women on the verge of transformation.

Key words: *Diaspora, Cultural identity, Marriage, Immigration, Expatriates, Indian and American cultures.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who is an award-winning poet and writer is known for her exploration of the immigrant experiences. Collections of her poems consist of poems about women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (1991) and YubaCity (1997), which won the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize and the Gerbode Foundation Award. Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage (1994) which won the American Book Award, & The Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. She wrote Novels like Mistress of Spices (1997), Sister of my Heart (1999), Palace of Illusions (2008).

She has published her works in over 50 Magazines and her writing has been included in over 30 Anthologies. As we live in a globalization age, we come across certain terms like Expatriates, Diasporas, Transnational's, and Migrants etc., which cannot be distinguished from one another. Since half of 19th century, the concept of Diaspora has been used differently. From 1980s, the terms like 'Expels', 'alien residents', 'immigrants', 'expatriates', 'political refugees' were used for the term Diaspora. From the mid-1990s, Diaspora stands for the people who live outside their national territories. Innumerable voices of immigrant experiences were expressed in Diasporic literature of the female writers, of Indian origin like Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Sunetra Gupta & Bharti Mukerjee.

Their works have common themes related to Diasporic consciousness like search for identity, isolation, trauma in minds. People in Diaspora are held physically between the two worlds, which neutralize their belongings to the other location. The Diasporic individual will try to hold on to the values of homeland in host land and basically pave way for identity crisis, as this holding on cause for mental clash, perplexity, and other such issue. In an alien climate or background, they try to analyze and retrace the tradition and culture of their homelands. Chitra Banerjee's works echo the aspects of alienation as she witnesses the binary that existed between the blacks and whites in the country of whites that is America.



Diaspora has its own significant and valuable position in world literature. Though it has developed in its separate historical background its meaning and concern is the same in every nation. Diaspora has its independent space and identity in Indian writing in English. Diasporic sensibilities reveal an individual's Diasporic experiences and feelings.

We all know the fact that the Diasporic communities come across several issues and they suffer so much, Diasporic sensibilities include the Diasporic aspects and problems like identity crisis, dislocation, nostalgia, alienation, rootlessness etc. The Diasporic sensibility is not something permanent, it changes. Diaspora leads one towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and defining oneself.

Arranged marriages, which were the way of marital rituals in the past centuries in most of the world, the concept of arranged marriage have been embedded in the mentality of people. Chitra Banerjee's Arranged Marriage has eleven stories, which focus on different issues resulting from the patriarchy. Some stories also discuss the contrasting cultural differences between east and west and the resistance it creates in women and the subsequent reactions of the society.

The work Arranged Marriage depicts migrant experiences of women protagonists, living in two different cultures struggling with crisis of exile/displacement and problems related to their identity. Her larger targets or focus throughout these 11 short stories is women caught or stuck between two worlds, their dejection, grief, frustration and how do they adjust to such scenarios. It helps us to evaluate or assess their attitude towards life or regarding life, desertion or saving of their cultural values. Each account has a freshness and oneness of Diasporic consciousness. Greater part of her stories depicts the life of women Indian immigrant and their life in the endless socio psychological clashes. One can see the authentic portrayal of struggles, conflicts, hardships, adjustments of characters. The central point of in every story in Arranged Marriage is the issues of adjustment which rises from cultural differences experienced by an Indian woman in the western land.

The first story in the collection 'Bats' depicts the story of an Indian women who undergoes emotional as well as physical torture from husband and finally she dares to return to India with her child. The next story 'clothes' deals with fears that the central character faces and adjustment she makes. There is also theme of unfulfilled promise of a marriage. We can evidently see the conflict of consciousness and sense of assimilation. 'Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs', the protagonist who comes to America, hopeful to have a better life and dreams, but what she experiences there is different. She is an immigrant and there are descriptions of several incidents to prove the kind of difficulties that she faces. The characters have inner tension, as they feel sense of belonging to certain place and culture at the same time, being an outsider. The clash between cultures, conflict between family and career which affects immigrant women are interwoven with the other Diasporic consciousness in Arranged Marriage and, they struggle with material and spiritual insecurities.

'The word love' is about unnamed narrator is living-in-sin with an American man while she is studying in college. Her mother is widow and very strict. The narrator receives weekly calls from her mother so, that she doesn't allow her boyfriend to receive the calls. Her boyfriend seems to be jealous of her dependence on her mother. She is depressed and suicidal. She remembers a tale her mother told her once of a peasant's daughter who was let



'too free' by the peasant. As a result, she gets pregnant and commits suicide. The narrator decides to commit suicide but takes a walk first. During a walk she decides to leave both her mother and boyfriend to start a new life with no judgments.

'A Perfect life' depicts the character Meera as a girl who rejects traditional roles of a wife and mother in favor of her career and education in America. The prominent issues of the expatriate community in the nation of their choice. In the story 'Affair', character Abha recalls how her friend Meena failed to adjust as she felt isolated and lonely from her husband Srikant which causes her to become close with Ashok. We can see several ways which the characters adopt to get rid of their isolation.

The 'Meeting Mrinal' the last, in this the character Asha is jealous of Mrinal, who is her childhood friend and who enjoys freedom of movement, power, and economic security in England, but then becomes disillusioned of her perfect life. The women characters in these short stories experience conflict of consciousness and they struggle to define themselves like those of several south Asians and Americans. This work is full of stories about women in love, in difficult situations etc. We can see one thing through writing that Diaspora is the pattern or matrix of consciousness that encompasses various conflicting characteristics and the work is an assortment of immigrant life and experiences.

II. CONCLUSION

Chitra Banerjee lived in India for 19 years before immigrating to USA. The stories have protagonists, who are torn between traditional values which are intertwined in their minds and then the new perspective. The above said perspectives are depicted as a result of the Diasporic experiences of the protagonist or someone who is close to the protagonist. As a result of this contradiction of values, multiple consciousnesses are being formed by the women in these texts. They not only question practices around them, but also start to question their own identity. This crisis of identity leads to a new formation of the idea of 'self'. The women often come in terms with the fact that, the identity of them is unified in terms of their experiences in East and West.

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