

A CULTURAL CHANGES AND IDENTITY IN ARRANGED MARRIAGES - CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

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ABSTRACT

A study done on cultural changes and identity crisis in consideration of arranged marriages – novel. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an immigrant writer whose stories deal with the life of Indian immigrants in America, especially women immigrants in America. As orthodox Indian women, they are unable to adapt themselves to the American culture, which they think has no value. Free society, sexual freedom, cohabitation, neglect of parents and elders are unheard of in India, and when an Indian immigrant woman makes an encounter with such factors in America, she is shaken mentally and cultural conflict crops up in her resulting in a quandary in which she remains indecisive.

Keywords : individuality, identity, immigrant experience, patriarchal society, cross-culture, brutality, inescapability

INTRODUCTION

To analyze Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage so as to highlight how the female protagonists in the stories are compelled to develop a positive attitude in life and how they surmount trans-cultural conflicts in the alien land. In the anthology, Arranged Marriage, all stories deal with the cultural conflict which the Indian characters suffer in their life in America. Majority of the characters are new settlers in the alien land, and at the beginning of their lives in America. They find extremely difficult the American way of life; American culture, conjugal life, and personal morals. In fact, it is a cultural shock to them but slowly they understand the realities of life and it is a question of survival for them. Women suffer more than men, and as dependents on men, especially extramarital sexual relationship. Even in the midst of sufferings and pains, they develop a positive attitude in life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Gunjan Agarwal (2015) "Immigration Proves A Boon: A Study Of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage" Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a literary voice for Indian immigrants and Americans of South Asian descent, has also established her recognition as a poet, a creator of novels, short stories, children's books, an essayist and a community activist. The formative influence of Indian culture and literature which provided her a system to know the meaning of life is rich in her because she grew up in a traditional middle class Eastern Hindu family. In Arranged Marriage, her short stories, while continuing these themes, probe more deeply into related issues of women's survival, relationships (including mother-daughter relationships), role in the family and in society, and the consequences of immigration. These stories celebrate Indian women's immigration to the United States as a journey from oppressed or miserable conditions to freedom and discovery of self with the inspiration of western influences. This promised land of America seems to unfold abundant possibilities which help in realizing the dreams of all the estranged women characters who wish to achieve their lost status and freedom in a society where male plays a hegemonic role.

NAEEMUL HAQ (2017) "CULTURAL CONFLICT IN CHITRA DIVAKARUNI'S ARRANGED MARRIAGE" Arranged Marriage is an anthology of short stories published in 1995 by Chitra Banerjee Divakarun, and it contains ten stories. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an immigrant writer whose stories deal with the life of Indian immigrants in America, especially women immigrants in America. As orthodox Indian women, they are unable to adapt themselves to the American culture, which they think has no value. Free society, sexual freedom, cohabitation, neglect of parents and elders are unheard of in India, and when an Indian immigrant woman makes an encounter with such factors in America, she is shaken mentally and cultural conflict crops up in her resulting in a quandary in which she remains indecisive. Some women refuse to adapt and they suffer, and return to India or accept their destiny.

C.G. Karthikadevi, (2019) "Cultural Conflicts in Chitra Banerjees Arranged Marriage" Literally 'Diaspora' means 'to scatter' or dispersion, It refers to the loss of homeland, a shift of population from one locale to another. The expatriate writer undergoes the pain of homelessness, alienation and a sense of belongingness. The old memories keep on hovering in the mind of expatriate writers. The new land and unfriendly neighbourhood lead to the feeling of frustration and depression. There are so many Indian English writers can be recognized under the umbrella of diaspora: Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, V.S.Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, HanifKureishi, Bharati Mukherjee, JhumpaLahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni etc. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian born American settled author. Her works are mostly set in India and the United States. She has also focussed on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. Her debut short story collection Arranged Marriage won an American Book Award in 1995. The paper highlights how the Indian born women encounter the difficulties and knots in their new lives in America through the short story collection Arranged Marriage.

S. F. Filomine White Sheela (2018) "Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as an Adept in Exploring the Problems of Traditional Arranged Marriages and Rebellious Experience Against Social Traditions: A Brief Analysis" This article examines in detail about the problems encountered in arranged marriages, which focus on different issues relating and resulting from the patriarchal society. All the eleven stories differ in plots but revolve around the same theme, and some stories discuss the contrasting cultural difference between the East and the West and the resistance it creates in women and the subsequent reactions of the society. The protagonist is usually a woman who is, sometimes, married in an arrangement and suffers because of the expectation she is suppressed to have and expectations she must meet. Through the instances in the stories, it can be seen that the choice of the bride depends on whether or not she is submissive, and is skilled in household chores. A girl may be rejected for having too much education because it is believed education corrupts a girl's mind, such practices strengthen patriarchy.

ARRANGED MARRIAGE (1994)

Arranged Marriage (Anchor Books), Divakaruni's first collection of stories, was published to great critical acclaim. It won an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles award, and a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award and went on to become a bestseller. Adopted as a text in many college classes, the collection focuses on immigrants from India caught between two

worlds. The characters are both liberated and trapped by cultural changes as they struggle to carve out an identity of their own.

For the women brought to life in these stories, the possibility of change, of starting anew, is at once terrifying and filled with promise, like the ocean that separates them from their homes in India. From the story of a young bride whose fairy-tale vision of California is shattered when her husband is murdered, forcing her to face the future on her own, to a proud middle-aged divorcee determined to succeed in San Francisco, Divakaruni's award-winning poetry fuses here with prose for the first time to create eleven unforgettable portraits of women on the verge of transformation.

Cultural changes in Perspectives on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Feminism and Diaspora offers insights into Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's provocative and popular fiction. In their engaging and comprehensive introduction, editors Amritjit Singh and Robin Field explore how Divakaruni's short stories and novels have been shaped by her own struggles as a new immigrant and by the influences she imbibed from academic mentors and feminist writers of color. Twelve essays by both aspiring and experienced scholars explore Divakaruni's aesthetic of interconnectivity and wholeness as she links generations, races, ethnicities, and nations in her depictions of the diversity of religious and ethnic affiliations within the Indian diaspora. The contributors offer a range of critical perspectives on Divakaruni's growth as a novelist of historical, mythic, and political motifs. The volume includes two extended interviews with Divakaruni, offering insights into her personal inspirations and social concerns, while also revealing her deep affection for South Asian communities, as well as an essay by Divakaruni herself—a candid expression of her artistic independence in response to the didactic expectations of her many South Asian readers.

Conflict in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage

Being women have never been easy in any situation, whether married or unmarried. Those who are married will commonly experience a doubled-burden conflict. They will culturally be justified under husbands' control and are obliged to follow what their husbands want. If they fail to follow this typical rule, they will face some problems and conflicts. The conflicts in domestic circumstances are more likely to happen when the wives are accused to fail to obey the husbands' rules and controls. In Divakaruni's arrange marriage such conflicts and domestic violence is obviously found in several cases. The dominant cases are because of the cultural belief that wives are husbands'; that women should end up and surrender in an arranged marriage they do not even know who will become their future husband. Their father will arrange a marriage for his daughter when they have already grown up. This internal conflict is saturated within the women's psyche. The internal conflict of the main character facing above clearly represents how women in their culture are supposed to give up their destiny into her father and family decision, it is not acceptable to deliver a protest or even betrayal against their father's choices. Their mothers teach them to do so and their mothers' mother and so forth. It is a tradition that has already been upholding strongly. The notion of this sort of culture is somehow problematic for women living in such a cultural background. In one hand, they want to and taught to be obedient to their parents; not to disappointing what their parents have decided for them. On the other hand, women who are tightly bond with this tradition also want to be free to decide what and who to marry. This situation has frequently

triggered an internal conflict that the women have to deal with. The conflict will never end even when they have got married. Now, the power lies on their husband. Commonly, the husband holds the entire control on what his wife should and should not do. A wife has a bare freedom to choose and decide what she wants to do. All they need to do must get permission from their husbands.

Two Themes In Arranged Marriage By Chitra Divakaruni

In her book Arranged Marriage, Chitra Divakaruni repeatedly uses several themes to convey her abhorrence of the institution that is arranged marriages. The short stories she wrote were all full of misery and suffering. The four stories that show-case her distain toward this idea of mandatory monogamy are "The Bats", "Clothes", "The Maid Servant's Story", and "The Disappearance". The three predominate themes in these four tales of tragedy are abuse, both physical and psychological, a lack of respect for women, and tragic endings. The four stories showcase these negative results of and show Chitra Divakaruni's animosity toward arranged marriage. The first story, "The Bats", immediately shows one of the negative effects of arranged marriages.

In "The Bats", "The Maid Servant's Story", and "The Disappearance" the wives were given little to no respect by their husbands and families. In "The Bats" the mother was abused by her husband, a clear sign that he did not respect her. He also lied to her in his letter when he promised not to abuse her anymore but did after she returned. In "The Maid Servant's Story" there was disrespect of both Sarala and the wife. Sarala's husband and mother disrespected her by forcing her into prostitution. The husband showed a severe lack of respect for both his wife and Sarala when he tried to have sex with Sarala after his wife is sent to the hospital after she fell ill. His infidelity shows his lack of respect for his wife and his promise to be loyal to her.

The husband's refusal to stop when Sarala begged for him to stop and his justification that "once a whore, always a whore" shows how little he thought of her a person. In "The Disappearance" the husband raped his wife and justified it by saying she was "... a well-bred Indian girl" and that she should submit to him whenever he wants sex. He also did not respect her enough to allow her to wear the American clothes she wanted, let her go back to college or let her get a job. He claimed he was just being firm, a lie he told himself to cover his guilt. He was in denial of his disrespectful behaviour. The women of in Arranged Marriage were usually not treated with respect by their families and husbands. This problem of disrespect is just a single aspect of the negative nature of arranged marriages. The three predominate themes in Arranged Marriage, abuse, tragic endings, and a lack of respect, illustrate how toxic the environment formed through arranged marriages can be. Divakaruni uses these themes in the short stories in Arranged Marriage to show how a marriage that is not formed.

Divakaruni's literary output treats all shades of Identity Crisis such as alienation, marginalisation, despair, nostalgia, readjustment, assimilation, adaption or adoption. As a woman writer her writings are autobiographical. She portrays a kind of cultural in-between. Such, marginal" people are found in ever communal group, where a cross fertilization of cultures takes place. The United States of America, a land of opportunities and a culturally pluralistic society, is no exception to it. She also contrasts the lives and perceptions of first-generation immigrants with that of their children born and raised in a foreign land. And, inevitably, it includes the Indian-American experience of grappling with two identities.



CONCLUSION

To conclude, the style of Banerjee is simple and quite captivating for she is the author successfully depicting a simple but common theme in fiction. For instance, even if characters are varied theme is the same. She has proved herself to be an adept in exploring the nature and problem of traditional arranged marriages as well as the experience of rebellion against all social traditions and customs existing in the Indian society.

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