INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT LAW
Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
E-ISSN: 3070-0558
VOL.4, NO. 3 (2023)

"MOTHERHOOD, MIGRATION AND BELONGING IN THE FICTION OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI"

Shreeyash Avinash Kokate,
aushalyadevi Maheshwari Mahila Mahavidyalaya
Hivari Layout, Nagpur.
Mail Id shree3kokate45@gmail.com

Abstract: Motherhood, migration, and belonging are important themes in the fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Her novels deal with the emotional dilemmas of Indian women living outside the India who have been thrust into a situation involving cultural differences, family obligations and identity crisis. This article explores the effects of motherhood on women's personal decisions, relationships and experiences of migration. Using these selected novels, the study examines the relationship between the maternal bond and the creation of cultural memory and belonging in Sister of My Heart, The Vine of Desire, Queen of Dreams and Before We Visit the Goddess. It also reflects upon the ability of women to share traditional roles as they strive to be independent. The study emphasizes on Divakaruni's depiction of motherhood as a source of love, sacrifice, power and development. Her imaginative writing attests to the fact that belonging is not just a matter of where a person lives, but of their emotional attachments, cultural affiliations and personal histories.

Keywords: Motherhood, Migration, Belonging, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Diaspora, Cultural Identity, Women's Experiences.

Introduction

Belonging, migration and motherhood are important issues in contemporary Indian English writing that examine women in different cultures. Frequently, changes in personal identity, family relationships, cultural values and emotional attachments are part of migration. These changes may be particularly hard for women to handle because they often have to fulfill the family role despite changes in social dynamics. Additionally, their personal experiences are shaped by their role as mothers, where they are required to juggle their parenting duties with their own desires and emotions. These experiences show how families and culture interact with one another and with a quest for a sense of belonging.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning Indian-American author who depicts women's emotions, social and cultural experiences in her literature. Her fiction focuses on women who are tugged by family pressures, marriage, motherhood, migration, and (personal) independence. In her stories Divakaruni shows the struggles of women born and raised in Indian culture who are living in American culture. Her characters frequently can't find peace in their emotions of separation, cultural conflict, or even helplessness and uncertainties during the attempt to secure a meaningful relationship in a strange environment. The experiences of these women are an expression of emotion of the migration and the continued impact of traditional culture upon the lives of women.

Motherhood is an important subject in Divakaruni's fiction as it influences the identities, the relationships and the making

Received: 05-06-2023|Accepted:16-07-2023|Published:22-07-2023| www.ijeml.com

of choices for women. She depicts mothers as objects of love and obligation, sacrifice and strength in her female characters. But, in today's world, the experience of motherhood isn't always straightforward or rewarding. Sometimes women face their problems in fulfilling their family wishes and expect to keep their personal independence intact and to have their personal wishes fulfilled while trying to do both. These contradictions are explored within relationships between mothers and daughters as vicarious experiences of difference in values, experience and expectations can alter emotional relationships. Through her portrayal of the motherhood, she reveals the challenges as well as the strength of women's roles in the family.

Divakaruni explores migration as another critical issue in her novels. As women leave India and travel to America, they are exposed to new lifestyles, cultural norms and social practices. While education, employment, and personal freedom can be opportunities that migrate to other locations, there can also be experiences of displacement and emotional insecurity. Many immigrant women are often faced with the challenge of preserving their cultural identity while in the midst of adopting the values of their new home culture. Through the characters of women who try to stretch out a chord between their countries and their lives' meaning, Divakaruni's gives voice to these experiences. Their struggles show that migration is a physical and emotional/psychological process.

In Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire, Divakaruni explores what family relationships, marriage, motherhood and migration do to the lives of Anju and Sudha. Their individual experiences show that girls and women react to their cultural expectations and emotional challenges in different ways. The novels also highlight the importance of female relationships in providing emotional support during challenging circumstances. In these characters Divakaruni looks at how women's narratives, about family and belonging transform with what they go through.

Before We Visit the Goddess explores three generations of a family, living through different experiences of emotionally charged struggle, conflict and cultural transformation. The novel discusses the intergenerational relationship as a theme in parental identity and practices, particularly motherhood and migration. It also emphasizes the complexities involved in decoding decisions and expectations when understanding the choices of women. It is through such experiences that Divakaruni de-scribes' events that make one feel a part of a place one that is more to do with emotional connections, personal awareness, and acceptance, than simply where one was born.

Divakaruni's fiction is intertwined with the sense of belonging and cultural identity. Her characters tend to be emotionally rooted in India when even after settling in America. Loving the memory of childhood, family traditions, food, language and relationships remain integral to their concept of 'home'. Meanwhile, their encounter with new country helps them to rethink the old values and ever have different views. The resulting situation becomes complex, in that a woman can feel a sense of belonging to more than one culture, yet it is paradoxical that this produces a lack of complete belonging in either of these cultures.

Received: 05-06-2023|Accepted:16-07-2023|Published:22-07-2023| www.ijeml.com

In the present study, the themes of motherhood, migration and belonging are explored alongside in some novels by Chitra Banerji Divakaruni. It explores the effects of motherhood on women's deeper emotions, shifts in one's relationship and cultural identity as a result of migration, and feelings of belonging in new and strange environments. The difficulties faced by the women in reconciling family obligations to their personal freedom also are studied. The paper hopes to discuss these themes to determine the strength of Divakaruni's portrayal of the women, their emotional dilemmas and undergoing metamorphosis in Indian diasporic works.

Review of literature

Akilandeswari and Sundararajan (2021) explored the issues of women, motherhood and love of the family in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire. They explore how women cope with family obligations and cultural norms and the emotional challenges they face. The scientists point out the dilemmas confronting women characters between individual choices and constraints due to the patriarchy system. Their conversation also links motherhood and family relations with growing women archetypes and experiences of diaspora.

Bividusha and Jebaruby have investigated the relationship between mother and daughter in Divakaruni's Before We Visit the Goddess (2020). They bring a human touch to the relationship between women of different ages. The novel is a portal to explore family expectations and cultural values: and how these affect relations between mother and daughter. There are also issues concerning emotional intelligence if family members are separated and go through adjusting to new situations.

Buley-Meissner (2010) did a bibliography review on the literary contributions of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The study highlights several areas concerning cultural identity, family, community, as well as how families and community are experienced by Indian and Indian-American women, provided throughout Divakaruni's chapter. It also celebrates her presentation of a range of literary genres to represent complicated emotional and cultural conditions. Overall, this work constitutes a helpful background to understanding the place of Divakaruni in the Asian American poetic and literary canon, as well as her emphasis on the interweaving of cultures in her poetry.

Mini and Ambika (2021) gave an insightful study on écriture féminine and single motherhood in few Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Their study highlights the portrayal of women and what responsibilities they bear for caring for their children without the help of a traditional family system. The study's subject is significant for understanding the impact of motherhood on the independence, personal choices and emotional wellness of the women. It also provides an insight into the role of the mother beyond that of marital wife and family woman.

Priborkin (2008) studied the construction of a family and its identity within Divakaruni's novel Queen of Dreams, focusing in particular on how parents shape children's personal identities. The results from the study offer a useful view on the role of family narratives, memories and relations in the construction of a cultural heritage for a person. The mother/daughter relationship in the novel

Received: 05-06-2023|Accepted:16-07-2023|Published:22-07-2023| www.ijeml.com

is particularly significant due to the two different generations faced with difficulties of communicating and understanding one another culturally. This work helps to enrich the debates around the figure of motherhood, inheritance of identity and belonging in Indian American literature.

It was explored that how female subjectivity is constructed with narratives of motherhood in the selected novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni by Purī (2020). Conventional experiential notions of motherhood are challenged and the ways in which maternal experiences shape women's identities in social and cultural contexts explored. It deals with the negotiation of the female subjectivity, and this is important to an analysis of the issue of motherhood that goes beyond the static expectations of domesticity. This view enables one to analyse maternal relationships as linked to the agency of the mothers, their personal preferences, or their varying social roles and positions.

Shanthi and Gejeswari (2021) focused on diasporic experiences in Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams, and also touched upon The Vine of Desire. Their research looks at migration's impact on Indian-American characters in a larger context, with particular attention to the characters who are women. The researchers flag the 'cultural and physical struggles' that many people face when they live between Indian and American culture. The way that Divakaruni portrays experiences of immigrant living through memories, cultural difference, and relationships is reflected in their conversation.

Motherhood

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's fiction explores the theme of motherhood. Her novels examine women's emotional, social and personal experience of their role as mothers and their encounter with various challenges in their lives. Maternalism is shown in the context of love, care, sacrifice, responsibility and emotional attachment. But Divakaruni's motherhood isn't constrained by Motherhood definitions. She also explores the role of motherhood (and its responsibilities) on women's personal decisions, independence and relationships. Her female characters invariably find it difficult to meet the aspirations of their own dreams and desires the needs of their children and families. Motherhood is an emotional theme that plays a critical role in novels like Sister of My Heart, The Vine of Desire and Before We Visit the Goddess. These stories reinforce Divakaruni's belief that mothers can be strong and happy, and that they can also face challenges, miscommunication and personal loss.

Migration

Migration is a very important theme in Divakaruni's fiction as it affects the social and emotional life of her characters. The migration of many of her female characters to America from India in pursuit of better opportunity or family security or alternative futures. But it can also raise problems related to coping with your new culture, new homes and communities, language barriers, family pressures, emotional distance, and a variety of other factors. Women need to acquire skills in understanding new practices in society and at the same time preserving their link with Indian traditions. Divakaruni brings up the idea of migration as a process fraught with opportunities and challenges. Migration can offer more independence but also uncertainty about identity/belonging. In her character's perspective, she's looking at how women react to cultural differences

and how they grow new perspectives of their lives, gradually. Her novels imply that migration is more than a feature of international relocation, but that it is also an emotional journey which affects personal relationships and individual identity.

Belonging

Divakaruni also has a number of works that probe the notion of belonging. Her characters often have a trouble understanding of where they fit: into more than one cultural environment. Belonging can mean remembering one's own country, emotional rapport, tradition with family, or assimilation within the new country. As Divakaruni demonstrates, a feeling of home doesn't always occur at the moment of arrival in another country. Even if women have families and social contacts in the communities they live in, they can be isolated. Familiar cultural environments will not necessarily ease their sense of displacement, however. In this experience, Divakaruni argues that the sense of belonging emerges from emotional safety, learning about oneself, and meaningful connections; it is not solely dependent on place.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Literary Perspective

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the prominent contemporary Indian American authors. Her fiction is about women's life, the family relationships, cultural awareness, migration and personal independence. She is very sensitive to the emotional traumas of women in a situation where they are subjected to social expectations and cultural restrictions at the attempt to take decisions on their lives. Her novels generally discuss the traditional Indian values and the transition in the social conditions. Divakaruni displays through the lives of these realistic characters and emotionally attached stories, the hardships endured by women in both Indian and immigrant communities. From her point of view, her works such as Sister of My Heart, The Vine of Desire, Queen of Dreams and Before We Visit the Goddess are interpretations of a variety of aspects of motherhood, migration, family and belonging. Her literary style reflects her strength as woman and her capacity for adopting new role to personal experiences.

Diaspora

It is significant that Diaspora is a key concept at understanding Divakaruni's fiction, as a lot of her character-lives consequently, outside their homeland, yet holding emotional, cultural ties with their homeland. The Indian community continues to have a relationship with Indian customs, family ideals, language, food, and cultural recollections. These connections may serve to give comfort and familiarity in a strange environment. At the same time diasporic life can give rise to tensions between traditions passed on through the blood and those imposed by the host country. It is through a series of stories of women who try to maintain a culture while adapting to American society that Divakaruni covers these experiences. Her novels also explore the reactions of various generations to the diaspora, as younger family members cultivate and express other cultural identities than their parents do. These relationships provide Divakaruni with a lens to see diaspora as a cultural memory, emotional attachment and the flux of the self.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity plays a major role in Divakaruni's novels as her female characters often find a conflict between the

Received: 05-06-2023|Accepted:16-07-2023|Published:22-07-2023| www.ijeml.com

values of their homeland and those of the society in which they are living. Factors affecting their sense of identity include family customs, societal norms, belief systems, language, and their personal relationships. For women, migration can present an opportunity to rethink and challenge the beliefs and practices that have influenced their lives in childhood. Some characters try to uphold traditional values of culture and some others doubt the expectations that limit their independence. For Divakaruni, cultural identity is not a static phenomenon but one that is dynamic. As she encounters various cultures in her interactions with them, her characters slowly come to understand themselves. In Queen of Dreams, the bond with mother is a delve into the intergenerational cross-cultural sense of belonging. The series of experiences in which Divakaruni's cultural identity is shaped by memory, family relations and personal decisions.

Women's Experiences

The characters in Divakaruni's fiction is based on the experience of women. Her novels delve into the emotional and social challenges women experience in marriage, motherhood, family life, migration and day-to-day living. She depicts women that face conventional pressures and strive for self-determination, emotional safety, and satisfaction. Often these women can feel lonely, deceived, in conflict with their culture, and may have challenges relating to their relationships. But Divakaruni also focuses on how courageous, determined and flexible they have been, to get through the difficult situations. The adventures of Anju and Sudha in Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire depict the impact of friendship, family duties, motherhood and migration on women's choices. Likewise, Before We Visit the Goddess delves into the relationships of three generations of women, all separated, struggling and changing. In these characters, Divakaruni depicts women's lives as multifaceted and intricate, challenging our stereotypes of its mother-daughter-wife selves. Her fiction acknowledges the unique goals and aspirations of women and their on-going struggle to create successful and independent lives for themselves.

Conclusion

The current investigation highlights the significance of motherhood, migration and belonging in the fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Readers of her novels gain valuable insight into the feelings and social and cultural constraints faced by women who try to fulfil family commitments but also pursue their lives' aspirations. In her portrayal through female characters, Divakaruni portrays motherhood as a love-a-thon, a sacrifice, a responsibility and emotional strength. All the while, she shows how one's traditional role expectations can shape a female's choices and limit their independence. As the embodiment of a mother, her portrayal of those relationships is a complex one, especially along generational lines when moms' lived experience and values differ from those and lived experience of their daughters.

Migration becomes another important aspect that manifests in women's identities and relationships. Both, in Divakaruni's work, migration to another country can provide opportunities for growth and change, but also evoke feelings of loneliness, dislocation, and cultural uncertainty. She frequently has her characters having problems with holding onto Indian traits and identity in strange

Received: 05-06-2023|Accepted:16-07-2023|Published:22-07-2023| www.ijeml.com

surroundings. The experiences here show that moving around is not just physical: it also radically alters the perspective from which the person sees himself, his family, and society.

Through the study of Sister of My Heart, The Vine of Desire, Queen of Dreams and Before We Visit the Goddess, adherence is seen as closely related to emotional attachments and cultural remembrance as well as personal feelings. In the process, Divakaruni develops her women characters' sense of home, as it isn't always deciphered by their national or physical attributes. Belonging is not something that happens by invitation, it is something that exists through acceptance, understanding, independence, and human relationships that are meaningful. Her stories also emphasise resilience of women and women's face to adversity with respect to motherhood, family and migration.

The overall impression of Divakaruni's fiction is a thoughtful one of a woman's evolving identities as a member of Indian diasporic society. Her works acknowledge the emotional aspect of motherhood, as well as challenging the expectations of society that restrict women's liberty. The study illustrates that the motherhood, migration and belonging are interwoven aspects of women's experiences, and each contributes to their construction of identity and sense of home. By highlighting women's experiences, relationships and self-discovery in a culturally relevant way, Divakaruni has made an impact in modern Indian English literature.

References

1. Akilandeswari, G., & Sundararajan, K. (2021). Concerns of women, motherhood, and familial love in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17(3). https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/4479
2. Bividha, B. V., & Jebaruby, Y. V. (2020). Mother-daughter relationship in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Before We Visit the Goddess. International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, 24(10), 7735–7737. https://doi.org/10.61841/2hhm9c74
3. Buley-Meissner, M. L. (2010). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A bibliographic review of resources for teachers. Asian American Literature: Discourses & Pedagogies, 1, Article 7. https://doi.org/10.55917/2154-2171.1006
4. Mini, G., & Ambika, S. (2021). Ecriture feminine and single motherhood in Chitra Banerjee's select novels. International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education, 13(2), 2674–2677. https://doi.org/10.48047/intjecse/v13i2.211306
5. Priborkin, K. (2008). Mother's dreams, father's stories: Family and identity construction in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams. South Asian Review, 29(2), 199–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2008.11932603
6. Puri, A. (2020). Questioning the making and negotiations of female subjects in the subversive micronarratives of motherhood in select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Panjab University

Research Journal (Arts), 47(1), 39–45. https://purja.puchd.ac.in/journals/purja-xlvii-1-jan-dec20.pdf

7. Shanthi, A., & Gejeswari, N. (2021). Diasporic experiences in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17(4). https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/4588