
Conjugal Relationship in the Select Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Ms. Meeti Ojha

Dr. L. S. Gorasya

Abstract :

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an immigrant writer whose stories deal with the life of Indian immigrants in America, specially women immigrants. She has narrated her own experiences as well as others' experiences as migrant Indian women in her novels and short story collections. This paper focuses on the marital relationship in the diasporic narrations of Divakaruni. She represents the man-woman relationship in the bond of marriage in the context of cultural conflict. Becoming the voice of her female characters who fight against the patriarchy, she depicts female consciousness deeply underlying in her works. She represents the East-West dichotomy in which women are trying to raise themselves from the shackles of male suppression.

Keywords : Indian immigrants - Diasporic narrations - Cultural Conflict - Patriarchy - East - West Dichotomy - Male suppression.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's profound interest in the plight of the woman finds place in her writings. Her work is an attempt to re-establish her inner psychological and physical being to her relocation and permanence in a distant land. She has dealt with the customs of her home land and the difficulties of immigrants in a new environment. Chitra Banerjee has beautifully balanced the traditional shift, ethnic transplant and the subsistence of native traditions with a shade of adopted culture. Divakaruni has evolved a new narration by reconnecting to her innate awareness, citing the pressure over women in their homeland and abroad as well. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is concerned with women matters and discusses the predicament of the women living away from

their homeland and has examined the Indian ethos fairly. The diasporic literature focuses on the subject, styles, patterns, figures and methods of writing. In pre independence the writers wrote about, politics, the heart of political issues and settlers from outside in homeland. Since Independence the center of writing is on the subdued, the inhabited and the aboriginal.

Women have remained desolate considering their age-old standing in society and family. The emigrant author is obsessed with the search for a room in literature giving space to his ideas. The expelled or relocated immigrants are outcasted from their origin either by professional cause or personal reasons, and are forced to stay away from their forefathers and base. The search for identity has been the classic subject of the literature. The writers have tried to paint the literary canvas with a mingling of cross cultures and imbibing of ethnicity of two lands, creating a beautiful picture of diverse civilizations. Here, Chitra Banerjee is in the category of first generation emigrant writers who have shifted abroad at a young age and has started writing as an emigrant. She writes about the emigrant feelings and confessions of not only Indians but other citizens as well. Her works explore women psychology in all roles and their share of pain and pleasure. One of her important theme is marriage and man -woman relations and the impact of replacement on marriage, the changing cultural scenario and adjustments in a new environment. This paper explores the marital relations in the works of Chitra Banerjee. Her woman protagonist are stronger and eye-catching and created with profound insight into human psyche. She tells about her women characters in the following way; "it is true that I do feel greater empathy with women in my stories, I have tried to imbue my male characters with strength and integrity....." In her works we will find variation in man - woman relations. The protagonists in her novels lead an incomplete life suggesting how they strive in changing domain.

Her *Arranged Marriage* first collection of stories ,deal with clashes related to love. The First story from this collection is "The bats" which is an account of a small girl and her wretched mother in a miserable physical and mental state who is battered at the hands of her callous husband. The tale is a single handed narration by the speaker, talking about the daughter's agony of her parents' troubled marriage, mother's whine at night, loud sound of rolling and dropping platters. It is a story of childhood and purity trapped in the ruthless institution

of marriage and the child's imagination, enthusiasm and enjoyment over live chickens and buffaloes. The mother is a subdued woman dependent on her husband economically and culturally. Everyday beaten up by husband she moves on in anticipation of a better day in her life. The sight of dark circles, purple-red wounds on her mother's face arouses fear in the heart of the innocent child creating an indelible imprint on her soul. She hates the suppression of her mother. The story shows the system of marriage and women's dependence, tolerating the bruises and offence given by the husband. Her effort of running away from the cage of horror is reversed taking her back to the same house of suffering because of her loneliness and the gaze and murmur of the women in her uncle's village. The child's innocence, enjoyment and excitement about the village journey is captured in these lines; I had never seen real live chickens up close before ...

"In her next story" Clothes which is about a young woman sumita whose hopes and aspirations are broken when her husband somesh sen is killed in a burglary in America. Here, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has related the different colours of clothes with various phases in one's life. The story opens with sumita's preparation for match-making ceremony common in Indian families. Sumita wears a dull pink coloured sari similar to the morning sky. Pink is the colour of shift and change. A movement from India to the US, denoting a social paradigm shift. Her spokesperson are sole narrators of their journey citing their sorrows and dilemma. As the story progresses Sumita Flies to the US after her wedding in beautiful blue and red margined saree. Accepting the western culture with a memory of Indian values sumita is enthusiastic about her new endeavour. She Plans to remain at somesh's store named 7 -Eleven, attending the customers with an appealing smile. The writer is talking about the mixed emotions of the protagonist in her voyage across the seas. How a daughter unhappy in the beginning over her transition, slowly agrees, accepts and prepares herself for the change. Everything is moving with a good pace suddenly when the narrator is shown standing in a white saree, the colour of terminating happiness.

Chitra Banerjee has discussed the conflict and fate of a married woman who is made to travel in a far away land on account of her marriage and who has to finally accept solitude and fight with the trauma of husband's death. Sumita sen is a strong woman ready to face the challenges of being alone in a

new land and braving the unseen pictures in her life confidently. Chitra Banerjee is concurrent to those female writers who employ their work as an instrument to release their bottled up emotions of displeasure about women's treatment as an object and placing them in their right place in the context of society and family. Her women characters stand against the odds and make a cliché for themselves in India and abroad. "Doors" is a representation of ethnic clash between couples living outside their homeland. Deepak and Preeti are married and living in happiness in the beginning. Preeti is an Indian girl of American values. She loves the American ways of living while Deepak enjoys Indian ethics. Both are happy until Deepak's friend Raj comes to live with them. The boys enjoy Indian movies and songs sitting and chatting together in the living room, whereas Preeti is disturbed with the intrusion .

She likes to keep the doors of her room closed which is an American way of keeping privacy. Preeti is a girl who likes liberty and enjoys independence which is also supported by deepak, on the other hand deepak is Indian by heart and soul who is brought up in Indian home rich in oneness and brotherhood. Preeti living in America since the age of twelve has adopted the free culture of American life and loves to remain privately even in front of deepak. Chitra Banerjee has described the arranged marriage culture of India where in the families are involved and marriage is not a union of just a boy and a girl but a cultural amalgamation between two families. It is bound by customs, rituals , society which is accepted by both the families. In India the importance of family surpasses the individual wishes and marriage establishes the social position of a woman. Preeti according to her mother cannot be bound by the walls of conventions required in Indian marriages. Raj's entry causes chaos in preeti's space .Here the communal clash is evident where both deepak and raj enjoy openness and preeti prefers to stay indoors. Doors ,here is a symbol of privacy at physical and mental level. It shows the seclusion ,independence and acts as a barrier not just to avoid interference but exhibits American way of life where people love distances in their life from their families and partners. Preeti tries to adjust with this change in her environment however, things turn bitter with Raj's prolonged stay .In an effort to prove his friend the survival of Indianans deepak becomes an anti -foreign, showing the male superiority over women .His love and interest for preeti diminishes and he behaves like a male chauvinist. Broken

by this change Preeti is lost between the cultural conflicts, trying her best to come up to the Indian expectations. This rift among diasporic society is also one of the themes of Chitra Banerjee's works.

There are many remarkable works which represent the marital relationship and its different aspects that need a separate study. The duties of a husband and a wife have changed tremendously with the changing scenario of moral upliftment of the women. The writers plunge deep into the psychology of the women and collect their experiences of mental and physical constitution. They frankly put forward the strong women who are no more willing to accept the old norms of an obedient wife. Chitra Banerjee has portrayed all kinds of family ties and kinships covering the life of the immigrant men and women.

Bibliography :

1. Banerjee, Chitra. *One Amazing Thing*. New York : Voice, 2010.
2. Banerjee, Chitra. *Shadow Land*. New Delhi : Roli Books, 2009.
3. Banerjee, Chitra. *The Palace of Illusions*. New Delhi : Picador, 2008.
4. Banerjee, Chitra. *Arranged marriage*. (1995), Print.