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**IMMIGRANT SENSIBILITY IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *QUEEN OF DREAMS*.**

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Abstract

Diaspora is derived from the Greek word 'diasperien' from 'dia' means across and 'sperien' means to sow or scatter seeds. The theme of exile, immigration and alienation are universal in the twentieth-century literary scene. Raja Rao, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, are all expatriate writers who deal with immigrant experience, culturalism, and hybrid identity. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, as a South Asian Writer, is an award-winning poet, short story writer, and novelist. She has migrated to the U.S. in 1976. *Queen of Dreams* (2004) is one of the best-selling novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. As an immigrant writer, she reflects her feelings, experiences through the characters in her works. *Queen of Dreams* is a tale of a young artist Rakhi who discovers her mother's past life and the reason for her motherliness. A woman strives in an alien country for identity both expected and unexpected identity. Terrorism brings out a woman's self-identity. Isolation implies to live a separate life, loneliness, from the members of the family, from society and from the world. A woman can achieve a proficient life in her imaginary world. Motherhood emerges as a key thematic issue for Diaspora in its search for an identity. In *Queen of Dreams*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni portrays the relationship between mother and daughter in three generations Mrs. Gupta, Rakhi and Jona. Who is Rakhi's mother? What is she? What are terrible incidents happened in Rakhi's life? Understanding, adjustment and hard work are the key elements in *Queen of Dreams*.

Keywords: *exile, immigration, alienation, culturalism, hybrid identity, terrorism, diaspora*

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Diaspora refers to the people who migrate from one place to another place and settle there itself. The immigrant has a sense of belonging to his own country and he carries his culture with him to his new homeland. The term 'Diaspora' denotes to displace communities which have been dislocated from their homeland through migration or immigration by exile. It is dislocation from a geographical of origin and relocation in another country. The theme of exile, immigration and alienation are universal in the twentieth-century literary scene.

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Diaspora is derived from the Greek word 'diasperien' from 'dia' means across and 'sperien' means to sow or scatter seeds. The expatriate Indian English literature is deeply rooted in the geographical culture and cultural ethos. The expatriate Indian creative writers such as Raja Rao, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, are interested in focusing the real characters of Indian born men and women, their culture and traditional life.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a South Asian American with her ancestral roots in Bengal, India. She has transcended boundaries, negotiating two different worlds from various perspectives. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1976. Her immigrant experiences inspire her to write novels, poems, and short stories. Her prominent novels are *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *The Conch Bearer* (2003), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* (2005), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *The Shadow Land* (2011). Her familiar short story *Arranged Marriage* (1995) portrays the chief theme of feminism. *Leaving Yuba City* (1997) and *Black Candle* (1991) are some of her poems. Immigration for a woman carries infinitely greater responsibility being the one to maintain their cultural identity amidst the evolution of a new being. The present paper aims at identity crisis, isolation, nostalgic memory, assimilation and searches for identity in her *Queen of Dreams*.

Identity crisis and isolation of the protagonist's mother are essential parts of *Queen of Dreams*. The immigrants undergo the change of identity in their search. Their experience paves the way to an identity crisis. They experience various situations from various perspectives. In the phase of an identity crisis, they view good and bad and happiness and sorrow in the same line. They begin to accept and face the reality of life. The new place renders them hope, chance, and courage to come out from their shell. Their immigrant experiences enlighten them aware of their identity problem and the problems in obtaining their shelf. A woman strives in an alien country for identity both expected and unexpected identity. This point is emphasized by the novelist. In the novel *Queen of Dreams*, the writer describes clearly, about Rakhi's quest for roots, the anguish of her mother, the kindness of her father, the love of Sonny and Jona and the hatred of racists. Rakhi struggles for individuality and attainment of a dream teller like her mother finally reconciles with her husband.

Terrorism brings out Rakhi's self-identity and also a crisis in the novel *Queen of Dreams* in which it is a tale of a painter, an immigrant daughter and a divorced mother who wants her individuality from her husband and also from her father. She shows her skill in the business of Kurma house, but in the competitive world, she finds failure in Kurma house business. Terrorism provides an opportunity to recognize Rakhi's identity. On developing her business, some terrorists attack her, her father and her friends vivaciously. Rakhi bursts out her feeling to show her self-identity and her individuality in the alien country. Her strong voice

asserts her search for her identity, "If I am not American... she adds, who am I?" (QD 274) When she argues with the terrorists, Sonny interferes and fights with them to save her, her father and her friend. After hearing the president's military plans, she wants to do prayer but as an immigrant daughter, her dilemma is either American or Indian. Sonny brings Indian's organization email copy, "Don't wear your native clothes. Put up American flags in prominent locations in homes and business pray."(QD 274) The novelist expounds the displacement and the rootlessness of the immigrants through the protagonist, her relatives, and her friends. After devastating September 11, the family faced the attack of 'goons who accuse them, as terrorists due to the color of their skin. She links the plot of immigrants with their rootless situation and position in *Queen of Dreams*. Motherhood emerges as a key to a thematic issue for diaspora in its search for an Indian identity. The relationship of Mrs.Gup[ta, Rakhi, and Jona is illustrated in the form of motherhood in the novel *Queen of Dreams*. Conscious and subterranean emotions evolve into a magical relationship between Mrs.Gupta, Rakhi and her daughter Jona. In *Queen of Dreams*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has represented a general role of identity wherein the first generational mother is shown battling with her inner mystic consciousness, while the second generational mother Rakhi an Asian-American reaches out to her ancestral land and the daughter Jona, is still oblivious of her roots.

Nostalgic memory is one among themes in the diasporic community. This longing and unbelonging make some of the people of the diasporic community to represent their nostalgic memory in their writings like poetry, novel, fiction etc., Nostalgic experience is a Greek word which means longing for past period and homesick to return home. The woman is a suppressor. Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams* recollects her past married life in which she and her husband Sonny are bound in the circle. They were college friends as well as lovers and they met at first in Pink Victorian House in Oakland. Jona, their daughter, reflected as a love symbol of their married life. He attended many parties because of his interest in music. He urged his wife to accompany him to the party. When some persons in the party try to tease her rigorously, she shouts loudly his name to protect her from the danger. But he is unaware of her noise by his interest in music. This incident asserts her to show that woman is a repressor. She never expresses this secret even to her mother. This event will be one of the reasons for their separation as well as Rakhi's divorce.

Isolation implies to live a separate life, loneliness from the members of the family, from society, and from the real world. A woman can accomplish a proficient life in this world. Rakhi's mother in *Queen of Dreams* exists as a type of seclusion. Rakhi's mother Mrs. Gupta's death creates a small gap between Rakhi and her father. She longs for her mother's love and affection and she needs to know the reason for her mother's isolation. Therefore, she discovers 'Dream Journals in which the word and letters are in Bengali. She seeks her father's help to translate them into English. Rakhi's mother says, "Perhaps she who always hungered to know about me, has learned more than she can digest."(QD 261) Here, Rakhi's discovery of her mother's

personal details and cause for her isolation which is found out by Rakhi. There are two plots in *Queen of Dreams* and they are the tale of the Dream Journals and Rakhi's current life in America. Rakhi's emotions, desires and longings are pointed out in a single line, "My mother always slept alone."(QD 4) She likes to sleep with her mother but her mother's loneliness makes a great separation between the relationship of a mother and a daughter. She quests for the reason for her mother's privacy at night time and identifies that her mother is a dream interpreter. Her own words about her mother are, "That was when I made the other discovery... My mother was a dream teller."(QD 7) Her outstanding work is to dream the dreams of other people, so she can help them to live their lives. If she sleeps with her daughter in the night, her primary task will be affected. Mrs. Gupta silently suffers by migraine due to this dream and she never shares her difficulties with her family members. She regrets that she cannot persist as a good wife and as a mother in her life. Her satisfied words are expressed by her,

"I wish to be a good wife, but that was impossible... I was not a good mother to Rakhi. I loved her but not fully. To love someone fully is to give up self-hood and I could not risk that. She knew this. Perhaps that is why she is constantly longed to understand who I am, to become who."(QD 328)

Here Mrs. Gupta's identity is expressed and also her love and affection to her family members is also elucidated vividly. Mrs. Gupta is a suitable person for the title of the novel *Queen of Dreams*. Rakhi's father says, "Okay, okay; my father would say... mere sapno ke rani; he'd sing in his husky voice until she smiled and said, oh, stop it, you ridiculous man!"(QD 33) His Hindi words mean that queen of dreams or were it my queen if dreams.

The theme of assimilation is mentioned, in *Queen of Dreams* through Rakhi character. Rakhi, an artist, divorced mother is living in Berkeley, California. Rakhi attempts to assimilate in her job, American culture etc., when Rakhi develops her Chai house business into Kurma house business. She finds another competitive Java business to opposite to her business.

At that moment, she is disturbed by the terror of September 11. The horror of September 11 creates another opportunity for resolving the outstanding issues of alienation. Her wishes of obtaining identity are frightened and reality turns to nightmare. When they are attacked in their birth land, In the wake of September 11, she and her friends must deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation. Rakhi at the beginning of her married life is reluctant to attend parties with Sonny, but after understanding her husband's skill in music, she assimilates to the Western culture of dance and music and modified herself. "She is beginning to understand, a little, what the club scene means to Sonny. It's not just the excitement and glamour, the money and easy popularity as she'd accusingly thought... she likes how the music surprises her as it moves from ethnic to techno to dreams, drums, and drums. It's okay not to know what 's coming next; she trusts it'll be good, or at least interesting."(QD 307) This novel ends with Rakhi and

Sonny's reunion. "She dances back to the center of the room."(QD 307) She adjusts herself slowly to Western culture.

Chitra Divakaruni's literary landscape has been designed by her conscious effort to identify and integrate the psyche of the two cultures and the metaphysical mappings transform the elusive realistic itself. A woman strives in an alien country for identity both expected and unexpected identity. Thus the immigrant narrative provides criteria for exploring American multicultural identities and literature

#### Works Cited

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