
**BOND AND BONDAGES OF WOMEN IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S
SISTER OF MY HEART AND THE VINE OF DESIRE**

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Abstract

Our society is full of paradoxes and contradictions. In this society female is considered to be a peripheral member of the family, both in her parent's house as well as her husbands'. Throughout her lifetime she is unable to decide her roots and their leads to her insecurity. Normally, Man-Women relations gets disrupted and women find comfort in the bond with other women, especially childhood friends and sisters. In the resent Indian English fictions, we can experience the bond between women have various emotional shades. They are aware of each other's needs, understanding and support of each other during critical times, coming together against male domination and tyranny. Besides the mother-daughter relationship, there is a bonding between women only because they easily understand each other better than any other relations. The relationship among women is a theme found commonly in women's writings. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire* examine the emotional bond and the tension between the desires, which the women characters, Anju and Sudha go through in the process of their growth.

Keywords: *peripheral, man-woman relationship male domination, tyranny.*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in Calcutta and spend the first nineteen years of her life in India. She has a unique place in the Indo-American group of novelists. She moved to the United States to continue her studies, getting a Master's degree from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. For several years she has been interested in issues involving women and has worked with Afghani women refugees and women from dysfunctional families, as well as in shelters for battered women.

Divakaruni's novels are the tale of East meets West. She shows the experiences and struggles of women in finding out their own identities... At Berkeley, she volunteered at a center for battered women, and with a group of friends, she started MAITRI in 1991, a helpline for South Asian Women that helps the victims of domestic violence and other abusive situations. In 'MAITRI' they provide legal and medical help and family counseling. They provide educational workshops, where they teach women legal and financial independence and survival skills, and also offer awareness workshops.

Divakaruni's major themes are centered around her desire, to investigate the identity of Indian American women and the multiplicity of experiences like geographically, culturally, psychologically, emotionally- that continue to shape and reshape it. Divakaruni discusses the

bonds that women share. Divakaruni particularly mentions the Bengali Women Writers' novels not merely because the Indian novel itself began with women writing in Bengali, but because she was more familiar with Bengali Literature than any other Indian Literature.

In the contemporary world, individualism is predominant in the society where the traditional norms are rejected. The term 'female bonding' or 'sisterhood' which promotes understanding, equality, and solidarity among women has faced considerable criticism especially from feminists of the developing countries. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni calls 'Sisterhood' as women's friendship, not of sisterly bonding. Personal fears, complexes, fantasizes and loneliness can be overcome by the stronghold of sisterly bonding. Divakaruni's short stories *Arranged Marriage*, and her novels *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire* abound in the relationship between women.

Divakaruni's works have women's strong bonds between women with her experience of the rift between the old India and westernized India in *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*. Anju and Sudha in *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire* are examples of such universal sisterhood. She describes the life of two Calcutta women, Anju and Sudha, who born only twelve hours apart in the same house, consider themselves twins and remain inseparable during their lives. They overcome all the critical and difficult situations their mutual understanding.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*, the protagonists are two sisters Anju and Sudha. They born on the same day. Sudha's father Gopal and Anju's father Bijoy have undergone a fearful experiment of finding out the 'ruby cave'. They have lost their lives in the adventure. A woman has to depend upon man at every stage of her life. As a girl, she has to depend upon her father, and in the middle stage, she accepts the domination of her husband, and in the last phase of her life, she has to adjust herself and live with her son. In the absence of a male in the family, there is no one to take care of the Chatterjee's family. Anju's mother is Gourimma, Sudha's mother is Nalini and Pishi is their aunt, who treat them as their own children.

Gourimma takes in charge of the bookshop after her husband's death Nalini offers physical support to the family. Aunt Pishi plays an important role in the lives of two young girls by showing them, her love and affection. She used to narrate her experiences to them thereby she indirectly inculcates in them the values and the virtues of women besides the reputation traditionally uphold by their family. Anju and Sudha are bound closely with each other emotionally and psychologically, they cannot imagine their life without the other. They share their own views and ideas with each other. The traditional joint family system is much helpful to these girls, to continue their relationship until the end of the novel. Anju says, "I could never hate Sudha. SMH,24)

Sudha's love with Ashok Ghosh is an interesting part of the novel. Later Nalini rejects him as he is from the lower caste. When they have the plan to elope, Sudha is forced to drop the idea, because of Anju's father-in-law who upholds the respect and prestige of them are more important than individual's likes and dislikes in the family. He told Gourimma that he would not expect any wrong opinion about the Chatterjee family girls. If it would happen in the future, Anju would be sent back to her mother's home. So Sudha had left the plan of marrying Ashok.

The two sisters are separated after their wedding. Sudha's condition in Mrs. Sanyal's family is worse, she is forced to do all the domestic works. The groom Ramesh reacts, according to his mother's wish. Before Anju's trip to America, she visits Mrs. Sanyal's home. After seeing the poor condition and status of her sister Sudha, she gets shocked and half-heartedly goes to America. Anju's life in America starts in an unexpected way. Sunil wants to maintain a distance in the husband-wife relationship. When she comes to know about Sunil's personal character, she wishes to come back to India. He reaches home late and returns home drinking.

Mrs. Sanyal starts to ill-treat her daughter-in-law Sudha, for not giving birth to a baby. Mrs. Sanyal sends Sudha for the test. The test report explains Sudha is normal and she can give birth to any numbers of children and the problem lies only with their husband. Impotency and Sterility are the two main problems in society. The society is ready to treat the women as a 'Sterile Women'. But it is shown partiality to treat man as an important person. It is the greatest biological discrimination faced by all women. Sudha's pregnancy creates a big storm in her life. When it is identified as the female baby, she is forced to go for abortion, Ramesh is passive and not prepared to support his wife. Sudha has to come to her mother's home to save her female child. Anju is deeply worried about Sudha who is also pregnant. The economic condition of the family becomes worse. Anju has to work for Sudha. She wishes to invite Sudha to America to fulfill Sudha's childhood dream. So, Anju earns money for Sudha. Without the knowledge of her husband Sunil, she goes to work. Hard work leads to miscarriage and the baby is identified in her womb as 'breathless'. Motherhood is the greatest pleasure and promotion to women in the world. Her health condition becomes worse, when she comes to know the death of her child, she becomes unconscious.

The Vine of Desire is the sequel to *Sister of My Heart*. Sudha is ready to go to America to take care of her beloved sister Anju. Ashok Ghosh again approaches Gouramma for the remarriage with Sudha. Ashok demands only Sudha and her love, not her child. Sunil has sent the tickets and Visas for Sudha and her daughter Dayita. She goes to America and the two beloved sisters are reunited again. Both Sudha and Anju know that Sunil was really in love with Sudha and had never been able to forget her; indeed, their friendship had almost broken up when Anju had discovered her husband's feelings for her cousin. The characters Anju and Sudha are bound together. They easily overcome all the critical and difficult circumstances, because they are in co-ordination, co-operation, and mutual understanding. Through this novels Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni brings out all the problems, faced by women generally in the society, women have to support, unite and coordinate each other to overcome these situations.

Works Cited

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