

Self Realization of the Female Protagonist and Expatriate's Conditions in Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*

G. Ranjitha M.A. M. Phil

Assistant professor, Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Engineering, Coimbatore.

Received 01st March 2021, Accepted 24th March 2021

Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the most prolific writers of contemporary times. Her novels have wide focus on women issues especially of women Diasporas. The paper aims to substantiate on the protagonist, Tilo's approach of her magical ability in order to cure other's problems with both physically and mentally. Tilo at one point of time attempts to break the rules in order to get a self satisfaction, thus not obeying her spices' words and the consequences she faces for the same also discussed. The novel *Mistress of Spices* has a wide focus on not only the central character but also with various diverse characters that belong to both Native America and also Indian Immigrants. The paper clearly tries to exhibit how through the novel the writer has achieved in presenting the balance picture of the immigrants in America.

Key Words: Diaspora, Immigrant, Women suffering, Liberation

© Copy Right, IJRRAS, 2021. All Rights Reserved.

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian born writer in the year 1957, but moved to United States at her age of nineteen in order to pursue her Master's in English at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. She completed her PhD in the University of California at Berkeley. Her literary career started with the publication of a poetry collection named *The Reason for Nasturtiums* (1990). She received American Book Award and also various recognitions and awards for her work *Arranged Marriage*, a short story collection which was published in the year 1995. She became a well prolific writer in English literature by publishing various thought provoking novels namely *The Mistress of Spices* (1995), *Sister of my Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), *Oleander Girl* (2013), *Before We Visit the Goddess* (2016) and *Brotherhood of the Conch Series: The Conch Bearer* (2003), *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* (2005), *Shadowland* (2009). Her recent publications include *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) and *The Last Queen* (2021). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novels are known for fine story telling. Through her novels she realistically presents the character's actions and events in front of the readers.

Correspondence

G. Ranjitha M.A. M. Phil

Assistant professor,
Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Engineering,
Coimbatore

All her novels deal with giving importance to women characters and thus she explores the problems of women in specific with women Diaspora. She portrays the problems of women diaspora's as she relates herself with imaginary characters since she moved from India to America. She is also known for her uniqueness in rewriting of the great epic Mahabharata titled "Palace of Illusions". She is the only writer who retold the story of Mahabharata from the perspective of female protagonist Draupadi.

The words self-realization in literature according to Mariam Webster's Dictionary refers to "the liberation of an individual from the sense of limitation brought about by identification with conditioned beliefs, opinions, fears, desires, and habits". The novel *Mistress of Spices* circles around the central character Tilottamma, but everyone called her as Tilo. She is from India but she acquires a skill of reading people's mind. She is allotted to own and work in a spice shop at Oakland, California. Throughout the novel she is shown to be a selfless character who always cares for another by providing right spices to solve their physical and mental illness. She also got a great magical ability of speaking with spices and thus both help the people with their problems. She was ordered and instructed not to leave from the spice shop at any cause. But after she saw a Native American named Raven she falls for him and from there her life started to change. Tilo, she disregarded and disobeyed the rules by falling for her personal affections and satisfactions, she made out one night with him. Though she liberated herself from the circumstance of her own limitations and rules she immediately accepts the punishment given by the spices. Since, she was so much surrendered to the spices they

forgave by leaving her to live an independent life.

The concept of expatriate is clearly portrayed in the novel *Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary the term Expatriate means "an individual living and/or working in a country other than his or her country of citizenship, often temporarily and for work reasons. An expatriate can also be an individual who has relinquished citizenship in their home country to become a citizen of another." In this novel the protagonist is an expatriate who resides in United States in order to work as a shopkeeper in a spice shop. In the novel not only Tilo is being an expatriate but there are also several other people who reside in the country of United States for various reasons.

Lalita is one of the immigrants from India who visited Tilo's spice shop often. She was compelled to marry an American. She was allowed to see his face only three days before her wedding. Lalita's husband had sex with her without her interest. She needed to tolerate all these sufferings with silent tears. Then there was Jagjit, a young boy who was often bullied by his American friends as he was wearing turban. Later he changed himself to Jag and also transformed into a criminal in order to earn power. Haroun the taxi driver, who was always passionate and hard working individual, worked day and night in the city in order to get success and recognition in the country.

Thus the paper attempted to focus on the female protagonist's self realization attitude in order to overcome the sets of rules that she was following since then. Tilo, the main character in the novel, she is using her magical ability and mind reading skills to help the people who are coming to her spice shop. But later on after she met Raven she attempted to liberate herself for her own self satisfaction. But she regretted her move towards going outside, by surrendering herself to the spices. The expatriate's social condition is well portrayed, though they appear only at the spice shop. The spice shop itself became a mini community where various sets of people with different character, culture and language met and came along. Thus the paper has made an effort to focus the views on Tilo's self realization and expatriate's condition.

References

1. Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. "The Mistress of Spices". New York: Anchor Books, 1997.Print.
 2. Dr. Gavani D. B. "Immigrant Indian Writers". Ravi Prakashan, Gadag, 2011.
- Kafka, Phillipa. "On the Outside Looking In(dian): Indian Women Writers at Home and Abroad". New York: P. Lang,2003.

Please cite this article as: **G. Ranjitha M.A., M.Phil** (2021). Self Realization of the Female Protagonist and Expatriate's Conditions in Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*. *International Journal of Recent Research and Applied Studies*, 8, 3(10), 55-56.