

Societal Rivalry and Controversy in Queen of Dreams by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract

The components of ‘**SOCIETAL RIVALRY AND CONTROVERSY**’ in the immigrant country’ in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s work are examined in this study. Her works frequently feature Indian-born ladies balancing ancient and new world values. The condition of characters who experience Tug of Cultures and their effort to develop their individual and societal identity in the host area are explored in this study. The focus is on Indian immigrants in the United States who are torn between ancient ideas and newfound ambitions. Immigrants’ mental health is affected in Western countries such as the United States because they are caught between two cultures: “limited but comfortable Indian culture” and “autonomous but merciless Western culture.” Intriguing situations from the two selected novels demonstrate how important the lives of immigrants abroad who yearn for societal identity in their new home are.

Keywords: Culture, Controversy, rivalry, immigrant, and assimilation.

Introduction

Queen of Dreams weaves together an Indian American experience and a key rivalry that emigrants encounter in their quest for independence and emotional fulfillment. Mrs. Gupta is a severely dysfunctional individual in every way. Mr. Gupta and Mrs. Gupta have a troubled marital connection. Because of their love for their only daughter Rakhi, the family manages to stay together without coming apart [1]. Rakhi and her husband Sonny, the second generation, likewise have a shattered life. This couple is split, and Jona is always shunning her parents. Rakhi makes a living by running a small business and painting to fulfill her creative and artistic desires. She also needs to balance her allegiances between India and America.

In her novels, Divakaruni depicts a woman in a multi-societal American culture, as well as women’s battle to assert their identities and self-work in the United States. It illustrates Rakhi’s struggle in increasing detail. Through the characters, the work beautifully claims and reveals the topic of conventional identity, family, and atonement. According to some researchers, the lived experiences of these immigrant

writers reflect the existential realities of geographical displacement, because;

“for modern or traditional man, it is the eternal quest of man to seek, to put down roots someplace, to possess some point of space to which he can relate emotionally or psychiatrically.” (Divakaruni 12)

The work delves into racial themes as well as the idea of diaspora identity. Rakhi, Mrs. Gupta's daughter, has an identity dilemma that stems from her inability to reconcile her Indian parents' identity with her American one [2]. She is born with a dual identity: Asian and American. Rakhi goes through another difficulty during this time. Rakhi owns the Kurma House, which sells Indian food adapted to American tastes, and the crisis comes in the form of a cafe called Java Cafe, which is part of a popular franchise that is successfully operating just across the street from Rakhi's tea shop. Rakhi grows fond of her Kurma House as the number of Indian visitors grows.

Rakhi fills the menu with delectable Bengali snacks to add to the Indian mood and thus becomes more engaged and interested in her newly-opened business. Rakhi looks at the Indian customers who come into her cafe and sees their attire.

“While some are dressed in western clothing, others are dressed in kurta-pajamas,” she observes. Lined faces reveal their age, implying that they are living in a distant land with many difficulties and few victories” (Divakaruni 53).

Rakhi believes that, despite adopting a western way of life, they do not consider themselves to be foreigners, which is ironic. They are her countrymen with similar skin tones. Rakhi finds herself caught between two worlds of experience: America and India, and she links her roots through these people [3]. For her, it becomes a therapeutic procedure. If identities are always changing, mutability appears to be the only constant. In other words, as Avtar Brah proposes, such variable identities are

“forged in the crucible of everyday life's materiality, in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (Divakaruni 65).

Rakhi is continuously negotiating her identity, engaging with the Indian community in California on the one hand while adopting American culture and lifestyle on the other. The magic realistic mode is used in Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams. Mrs. Gupta is a female Indian immigrant who dreams the dreams of others to assist them in their own life. Rakhi is fascinated by her mother's gift of vision and the capacity to guide others through their lives [4]. They live in harmony without adopting their adopted land's culture. Minority discourse is defined by a culture of protest and resistance, as well as a desire to accept and integrate. Culture isn't even close to being an organizational principle that binds a community's people together. It's also a way of establishing its independence from and opposition to other groups. Rakhi, a second-generation

immigrant, effortlessly adapts to the American way of life.

“It began with her birth, but she has had a tough time assimilating to American culture, and she believes she is in “a nation that seemed to me to be shrouded with perpetual mystery” (Divakaruni78).

Through human connections and experiences, Divakaruni's works explore the rivalry of East-West encounters. Its major protagonists are Indian immigrants in America who do not belong to either India or the United States [5]. As a result, the story offers a psychological exploration of the rivalries of alienation and rootlessness. Mrs. Gupta's aunt had given her a pouch containing a handful of soil collected items as a present from the promenade in front of the caves the night before she left Calcutta.

“You'll need the ground that millennia of dream tellers have walked on to get where you're going. I didn't inquire as to what she was up to. I was still enraged with her, and I was disappointed in what she'd decided to give steak as my farewell gift. It wasn't until later when I was in California and had lost all of my dreams, that I recognized the significance of the gift.” (Divakaruni 96).

Because of the person and community's lack of response and engagement in its own original culture, the novel Queen of Dreams plainly states that much oppression are not confined to only one class or community [6], but are universal and enormous. Divakaruni's delicate but powerful voice has forced the world to see her as a vital voice in the

mainstream of international literature, not as a marginalized Indian woman writer. Her books are a celebration of women's power, not their flaws. The novelist has articulated the many-sided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian women, not just in India but also in the new world, in a language of emotion and careful metaphor employing imagery provided by the female protagonists.

As she recaptures history in the most beautiful sense, Queen of Dreams acts as a bridge between transformation and migration, piling up minute details and knowledge. The road from slavery to emancipation through competing themes is a recurring theme in all of her writings. If the oppression of Indian women, their education, and the effects of Westernization are the factors influencing the development of their culture [7], The story not only addresses diaspora difficulties but also reveals societal clashes and emphasizes the value of transnational ties in today's globalized society. After learning about India and its societal past, Rakhi seeks to define her identity. When her life is jolted by fresh horrors, she wishes she could have her mother with her.

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stereotypes [8]. Her family and friends are dealing with dark new rivalries of their acculturation in the aftermath of the terrorist atrocities of September 11, 2001. The heinous brutality that befell them causes the reader to see those dreadful days through the eyes of immigrants and Indian Americans.

They are punished only because of their skin color or because they wear turban. Rakh's search for identity becomes more intense as their concepts of citizenship are questioned, and she is haunted by her racist encounters. During her battle, she receives unexpected blessings in the form of the possibility of fresh love and understanding for her family. Neither to India nor to America. The novel *Queen of Dreams* is about the real challenges that the second generation of today's Indian-American community is dealing with [9]. The Chai House was transformed into an Indian snack restaurant, or *chaerdokan* as it is known in Calcutta. They plan to model it like the shop where my father used to work so many years ago, with a few American sanitary touches thrown in for good measure. He'll show Belle and her how to properly boil tea and coffee, and he'll prepare the snacks himself. On a piece of paper, he writes "*pakora, singara, sandesh, jilebi, beguni, nimki, and mihidana.*" (*Divakaruni 116*)

The Chai House is a coffee shop in Berkeley, California, where much of the action of Divakaruni's novel *Queen of Dreams* takes place. Rakhi, the novel's protagonist, and her liberated Sikh companion, Belle, own the shop together.

However, contrary to popular assumption, the Chai House is depicted as a living organism that is sensitive to its surroundings and capable of dialectical interaction and progress [10]. As a space in and of itself, it binds together mental views and "experienced" existential experiences into a unified whole.

Rakhi thinks of it in terms of kinship, which requires as much of her care and attention as her daughter, Jona, and she laments that "*without me, my store and my daughter might not live*" (*Divakaruni 127*). In her novel *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni explores postmodern problems such as racism, terrorism, painting dreams, and the tension of dislocation and relocation that affects the lives and sensibilities of immigrants against a backdrop of magic and fantasy. Despite the externally imposed limits, the characters retain their right to self-growth and self-affirmation.

Despite Mrs. Gupta's initial rejection to convey her culture, Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* depicts the possibility of forging a bi-societal identity. In general, the characters in her stories are torn between entirely rejecting their motherland's old culture and alienating themselves from the new [11]. In reality, they are unable to completely abandon their original culture.

"Divakaruni's approach to ethnic identification is aligned with the view of the South Asian Diaspora that believes in the necessity of combining Indian heritage

with its American experience,” (Divakaruni 156).

Conclusion

On one hand, Divakaruni tells the ethical, moral, and psychological difficulties of Rakhi's existence, while on the other, she unfurls the realm of dreams experienced by Mrs. Gupta, who leaves behind “The Dream Journals” due to her secret life. After her mother died in a tragic car accident, Rakhi unearths the journal. Her journals are written in Bengali, an Indian language she has never studied. Her father, on the other hand, pledges to assist her by interpreting them. This allows both father and daughter to comprehend Mrs. Gupta's tribulations, which had previously been a mystery to them.

After reading the Dream Journals, Rakhirealizes who she is. Mrs. Gupta was unhappy with the choices she had made in life. She claims that she was unable to do justice to both her real-life relationships and her fantasy world [12]. Mr. Gupta was soon welcomed within her community. But she couldn't be happy in her marriage because devoting herself entirely to it would mean losing her abilities. Divakaruni depicts the lives of Indian immigrants from the perspective of a woman. These images are authentic due to the writer's firsthand experience as a member of the Indian diaspora. In her work, her motherland's societal bearing and the experiences of the country of migration collide and find a good and balanced expression.

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