
**A STUDY OF INDIAN SENSIBILITY IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S
'SISTER OF MY HEART'**

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**Abstract:**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian American writer. She is an award-winning author, poet, activist, and teacher. Her themes include the Indian experience, contemporary America, women, immigration, history, myth, and the joys and challenges of living in a multicultural human race. And she also mixed Bengali myths and stories of the gods in the Hindu tradition. Her ancestral roots in Bengal in India this perception clearly observes in her writings. She chooses the main relationships to sacrifice their lives for their family members, maintain bonds and blending east and west cultural incidents. Indian women position is changing time to time in space. Globalization is also caused by changing postmodern writer's perception. The Indian family relationships may seem complicated. It is an attempt to consider how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni novel *Sister of My Heart* stands for strong relations in an Indian family. Sacrifice, family, friendship, love, care, culture, patience and maintain bonds are common traits in India. Indian traditions and culture are part of the rich environment represented in the *Sister of My Heart* and the descriptions of Calcutta are mainly colorful. Basudha and Anjali both are cousins. Both are sharing their affection from their childhood; later continue adolescence and early adulthood. Marriage is very important in women life. Pity condition of widows, joint families and married women sacrifices her life for husband's families are common in Indian lives. It shows how *Sister of My Heart* goes through the discourse of collectivism and examines it on the creator of sensibleness.

Key Words: Diaspora, partition, sacrifice, love, care, culture, patience

Introduction:

In the early days, women were seen as grandmothers, daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, mothers, and wives who were proposed to cook, clean, and take care of the kids. Only men took care of having jobs and have freedom express his feelings in society. When education development started in India, people slowly started to think about women position. Later women slowly started her journey to learn about society and enter outside of the world. Along with teaching, politics, social, and economic fields has also started her journey as a writer. Stories are not new to India. Many earliest women used to tell many stories to their children at bedtime. As a river starts its journey very slowly from the place of its origin, the Indian women writers also begin its humble forward journey and in course of time, it gained maturity from the daily lives, social issues and other things it unveiled through the realities of India's society as such. Women started to composed Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, Tamil, Punjabi and Malayalam. The authors are mostly western educated, middle-class women who express in their writing their dissatisfaction with the troubles of upper-caste and class traditional Hindu women mesmerized in repressive institutions such as child-marriage, dowry, prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages and imposed widowhood. B. M. Suhara, Manju Kapur, Suniti Namjoshi, Namita Gokhale, Mahasweta Devi, Janaki Srinivas Murthy, Gita Mehta, Githa Hariharan, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sudha Murthy, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Indira Goswami, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni etc. women writers bestow their contribution through their writings.

About author's perception:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Chitralkha Banerjee) was born in 1956 in Kolkata in India. She is a novelist, professor, poet, essayist, short story writer, author, fiction writer, nonfiction writer, children's fiction writer, young adult fiction writer, book reviewer, and columnist. Divakaruni lives in Houston with her husband Murthy. She teaches Creative Writing at the University of Houston and writes for both adults and children. She has two sons, Anand and Abhay. She has used in her children's names in children novels. Her novels are *Arranged Marriage: Stories* (1995), *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Unknown Errors of our Lives* (2001), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Lives of Strangers* (2005), *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *Oleander Girl* (2013)

Indian Sensibility:

Sister of My Heart, although some of the characters immigrate to the United States, most of the story is set in India.. The story runs on the lives of two Indian girls, Anju (Anjali) and Sudha (Basudha). Sudha is startlingly beautiful; Anju is not. The story divides into two parts, the first part *Princess in the Palace of Snakes* covers childhood of both sisters. The fairy-tale begins; Sudha is listening while her aunt Pishi tells an old myth that says the Bidhata Purush (a god) comes to the birth of each child to foretell the baby's fate.

Below us, Pishi is a dark, stretched-out shape on the floor, fallen into an exhausted sleep, the dried salt of tears crusting her cheeks.' (pp.21) Their ancestor's house provided more secure for women. In the early years, women only at home men went for getting money for a caring family. 'Our great grandfather had them planted 100 years ago to keep the women of his house safe from the gaze of strangers.'(pp.16) Except for related men other men are not allowed in the house. 'In our house, the few men servants did not come up beyond the ground floor. And Singhji, although his deformity seemed to place him in a separate, androgynous zone, never entered the house at all.' (pp.66)

Pishi is Bijoy Chatterjee's sister, lost her husband at early age of eighteen, she doesn't have any children and support from her mother-in-law's side, because she continues her life with her brother's family and she joins her brother Bijoy's household and helps raise Anju and Sudha, she is a source of information and support for the girls. A woman has many restrictions in India if she is a widow the rules were doubled. Widows are not allowed for all functions this is explained by Anju, 'I hate Pishi when she puts on her patient smile and sits in the back of the hall on feast days, not participating, because of widows mustn't.'(pp.23)

A woman has some responsibilities in society. She doesn't have any identity in society. Her duty only gives birth to a child, support her husband, taking care of her mother-in-law's house, lighting their family name. Gouri opines, '...she believed that a woman's first duty was to support her husband.'(pp.40) Along with the family name, secure old ornaments also woman responsibility. Women are invested with the responsibility of maintaining the tradition. In Anju's birthday occasion, Gouri handover her old jewelry to her daughter Anju, 'It is an old jewelry box, and opening it I gasp at the pair of bird-shaped earrings inside, sparkling against blue silk.'(pp.55)

Caste also plays a vital role in India. Upper caste families not allowed lower caste people. When Anju and Sudha went for movie theatre at there Sudha met a lower caste man Ashok Ghosh. Before knowing his caste she feels comfortable to speak with him when she known about his caste, 'What? A lower-caste man? I squeeze shut my eyes, willing her voice to fade.'(pp.76) Later Sudha tries to continue her relationship with Ashok. The woman has little control over decisions and is rarely consulted over them. Sudha's mother Nalini cannot digest the situation and she distresses her daughter, she thinks learning English books is caused to elaborating ideas and not give any importance to tradition and culture, 'All the ideas she gets from those English novels you allow her to read, she passes on to Sudha.' (pp.81) Sudha was house arrested. Sudha thinks about her mother she was widowed and also penniless, except her there is no other being in her life. Though Gouri is a widow accepts all burdens on her shoulders, maintains book shop and started thinks about her daughter marriage, because of this reason she suffered a mild heart attack.

When they started marriage proposals both girls might be offensive to their future husbands. 'Nothing enhances a husband's affections like silk-soft skin' (pp.108) Then three mother's started thinking about two dowries. Gouri Ma decided to sell the bookstore. In the evening, the mothers discuss prospective bridegrooms. But Anju and Sudha aren't allowed to be present at these discussions. Sudha married Ramesh Sanyal, often travels with his job building railroads and bridges, a kind man, but unable to protect Sudha from his mother. Anju married Sunil Majumdar, born in India, a computer scientist from the United States

The second part of the story is *The Queen of Swords* Anju and Sudha's marriage life, their struggles, their kinship, their dreams and affection describes. Marriage has changed in unexpected ways. When Sudha in her husband's house she was received traditional gestures. 'May you be the mother of a hundred sons.'(pp.188) Sudha quickly learns the ways of her demanding and controlling mother-in-law. After three years were passed in Sudha's married life she didn't attain any pregnant. Though she is perfect to give birth a child, checked out by a gynecologist. Her ability suspects by in her in-laws. 'The doctor in Bardhaman, writes my mother today, pronounced that Sudha was completely normal, and for a few weeks matters seemed to have settled down. But now Sudha's mother-in-law wants a second opinion. So she's going to bring Sudha to Calcutta to be checked out by a leading gynecologist.' (pp.212)

Sudha's mother-in-law finds out that Sudha's child is a girl. 'When the test showed that it was a girl...my mother-in-law said the eldest child of the Sanyal family has to be male – that is how it's been for the last five generations. She said it's not fitting, it will bring the family shame and ill luck.' (pp.259) There is no reaction of her husband against his mother. Sudha told her mother she wants to leave the house. But there is no positive response from her mother. They said her place is with her in-laws, for better or worse. If she leaves in-laws home the baby becomes a bastard. Three mothers are widows and they also belong to upper caste family. Because of they only afraid of the society but not Sudha. Anju suggests Sudha as the Chatterjees family member she needs to escape from India and starts her new journey in western land. At there she could design a new life. When she reads Anju's letter, comes to a decision to maintain the child and goes to America, since the life as a single mother and a divorcee would be easier for her in California.

For the moment, Anju's life in the United States has not completely turned out as she expected. Anju starts collecting money through a job for helping Sudha for air ticket. Owing to physical overtiredness and mental stress Anju lost her baby.

Anju feels Sudha and her daughter Dayita is the only hope that would give her peace to forget the loss of her baby. In the distress condition also Anju thinks to maintain a relationship with Sudha and support her.

Meanwhile, Ashok proposes Sudha to marry her. But she refuses Ashok and his love because now she is not sure if she would be happy in trying herself to a man's whims again.

Sudha thinks that she cannot go back to the old restricted way of Indian life. She wants to start a new life in a new place.

Conclusion:

Often the events of the book similar to the happenings in these stories Fairytales. Anju and Sudha grow up in are very unusual in that it is run by three widow mothers Gouri, Nalini, and Pishi. Widow's condition is pitied. Joint families are common to India. How many problems are being faced by family members, they shared their feelings and try to solve the problems. Pishi sacrifices her life for her niece. Anju and Sudha don't have any chance to select their partners. When Sudha has taken divorce she escapes from asking a thousand questions and give advice by the society. Because she has taken decision goes to California with her child Dayita. Marriage does not imply a change in power relations for the woman. The woman's role is pre-determined to her: as wife or daughter-in-law or mother. Marriage is not the sole goal for a woman, marriage often marks the end of the woman's identity. The differences in lived experience for Asian women as compared with Western women, and caste, class, and social identities matter a great deal to the Asian woman.

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