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REFLECTIONS OF IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES AND INDIGENOUS SENTIMENTS: A PROBE INTO THE DYNAMISM OF LANGUAGE EMPLOYED IN *THE VINE OF DESIRE*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to analyse the language style of Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni in her novel *The Vine of Desire* in order to trace the existence of Diasporic consciousness emoted during the utterance of monologue or dialogue of the characters. The women characters, Anju and Sudha caught in the web of family dispute and in the complexities of man and woman relationship, react to the situations identified as instances burgeoning blissful thoughts or perpetrating painful reflections during their process of adaptation in America. They weep, yell, question, reply, argue, demonstrate, oblige, revolt etc. - all their activities, verbally expressive, communicate their Indian cultural as well as Diasporic experiences in a foreign land. The author uses appropriate literary devices to capture both the immigrant experience and indigenous sentiments of the women characters.

Key words: Diaspora, language, emotion, culture, marriage, relationship, conflicts

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni belongs to the category of writers who wish to portray their life experiences in English language. Banerjee probes diligently into the mystery of individuals' existential sufferings and predicaments in foreign lands and dexterously expresses them in English language. English language has become inseparable in her life that she employs it as a befitting substitute to her own mother tongue in order to think and act real; imagine and express what she experiences as real. Language has always been a tool to her to express the emotions of her women characters. However complicated it is, she employs figurative language components like simile, idioms, metaphor, irony and various other literary genres like epistles, essay, conversation, monologue etc. within her imaginative literature to describe her characters' emotional state and their affective experiences.

Diasporic literature is the out come of diasporic consciousness- a unique feeling emanating in the mind of people who go through an avalanche of anguishes and emotions while taking efforts to acclimatize to new cultural environment:

The Diasporic consciousness manifests itself in a variety of ways: a sense of loss and dispossession, a feeling of remaining straddled between two cultures, and anxiety to belong— either to one's native cultural milieu or the new environment; an assertion of one's nativity or immigrant status; an attempt to turn one's in betweenness into strength; an agenda of multiculturalism; an active interrogation of all notions of belonging and an ultimate urgency to prove oneself (Sharma, 2013)

The writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has an obsession with the common plight of Immigrants,

especially of Indian women's modern maladies of exile, loneliness, bewilderment, dislocation and loss of identity and she treats them as her subjects for factual discussion and imaginative renderings in the form of poetry and fiction. Her *The Vine of Desire* deals with the assorted emotions of anxiety, anger and apprehension emerging forth due to nostalgia and up rootedness. In other words they are the Diasporic manifestations converted into a stream of words signifying her power of eloquence and her reciprocation to witnessing the immigrant experiences escalating due to their familial and socio-psychological conflict in a land where they willingly or unwillingly square up their living.

Chitra Banerjee's humanitarian perception is mostly responsible for the expression of human predicaments: "Like other diasporic writers, Divakarini writes about human predicament and the crisis of identity in the alienated land of America though she has made it her homeland. Identity crisis, alienation, and nostalgia are the chief characteristics of her writings." (Archana Kumari, 2014) In one of her unpublished interviews she says that a writer essentially must be a full human being. As a full human being her language is saturated with emotional utterances arrayed in cavalcade. She does undeviating experiments with her language using a peculiar technique to show case the diasporic consciousness of her men and women characters in the novel *The Vine of Desire*.

Cross-cultural confrontations, family disputes and matrimonial conflicts happen to be the thematic substances finding expressions in this novel. Anju is grief stricken due to the death of her babe. That leads to a great holocaust in the family irreparable and unsettled. To get pacified and to be attended upon, she invites her divorced sister Sudha and her daughter against her husband's wish who is apprehensive that the presence of that beautiful woman at home may resuscitate the love he had for her before his marriage with Anju. His abstract fear takes shape and assumes dynamism with the passage of time and he determines to divorce his wife. There is a total ruin of the family with none obtaining what they want. Meanwhile running parallel to the family drama is there the comprehensive interpretation to cross-cultural

confrontations. Sunil fights with those who call Indians "Fucking Indians, showing off". (138) But he also exclaims in a tone of utter failure, "I'm tired of ridiculing America." (138) Sunil is frustrated and his constant struggle to emancipate himself from that state makes him go exhausted. His only pass time is to run nostalgic and romanticize his childhood in India.

Sudha, who comes to America with high expectations, feels shattered and also alienated even when she is amidst her own relatives or any other Indians. Sudha after her divorce with her husband goes to America, hoping, the new country shall open vistas of opportunities to live peacefully. Little she realizes that her aspirations shall be devastated due to Sunil, Anju's husband who expands his love domain with a morbid intention to divorce his wife and cleave to her permanently. Much against her sanguine dreams America appears not what it ought to be. The author makes Sudha to squeeze out her surprise, shock, and disappointment in a tone infused with nostalgia, pessimism, and a sense of defeat and loneliness.

Sudha shrugs. "America isn't the same country for everyone, you know. Things here didn't work out the way I'd hoped. Going back with you would be a way for me to start over in a culture is understand the way I'll never understand America. (320-321).

Anju is portrayed as an unpleasant character by the author. Her audacity in getting done what she aspired for shows her unstable mind. The author manipulates, a volley of imagery, metaphors, uncertain questions and also suspicious queries not only to make the readers watch circumspectly the repercussions of Sudha's arrival but also to perceive Anju's portrayal as a bundle of contradictions lacking insightful and instinctual responses common to women. Aiko Joshi, a critic in her review of the novel opines that the author's intention is to create her as an objectionable character: "as though the author had succumbed to the temperature of creating an image of India and its society as—backward, miserable, and oppressive." (2002) The author to ascertain that anxiety and perplexity are the characteristics of the

Diaspora community, casts them as figurative languages pooled in the form of interrogative words and sentences. She is convinced that the impact of interrogative sentences sometimes followed with answers upon the emotional content shall be stronger than plain assertive sentences.

....Anju makes a wish: that Ashok will be intelligent to wait for Sudha until she returns to India. At the same she wishes that Sudha will stay on with her in America forever. Does she (Anju) realize that her wishes clashing as they attempt to rise from our sublunary plane to the ear of the Gods, cancel each other out?

The beautiful Sudha. But what have we really learned about her? Of only the externals, the snow that cloaks a mountain in an illusion of sleep while an entire world of actions continues below. Small creatures moving through invisible burrows, larger ones crouched, waiting in caves. The leap, the sinking in of teeth, the outcomes that sometimes astonish but more often merely sadden. And at the center, the earth itself, rock and mud pressed seep of glacier. Who knows if it's readying itself for another shift, one that will end, this time, in avalanche? Or in a scarlet eruption that turns the land to ash?

The subterranean truths of sudha's life are the once we crave. (23)

Chitra's linguistic skill is exhibited not only in her usage of exquisite vocabulary but also in the narrative style. She resorts to express the emotions of the characters using different genres. There are epistles in italics exchanged between Sudha from India and and Anju from America and they are the fillers helping the readers to comprehend the story. The dialogue between the characters is occasionally in the dramatic form. The author uses them to bring out the kind of existential complexities that subsist in human relationship especially in conjugal Relationship:

Dinner is preceded by a tournament of circumvention, question

shot around the table, parried, shot back in the form of other questions.

She: Goodness, Anju! How late you are! I was killing myself with worry! Why didn't you call? What were you doing all this time?

She: Please! The way the two of you are going on, it is like I disappeared for a whole month .I'm a big girl, okay? and sometimes I need to stay on campus and catch up on things I need to do. Can we talk about something else now like what's for dinner. I'm starved.

He: your cousin's right- next time you should let one of us know what's going on.

She: You 're telling me to call! That 's rich! How many times have you been late and not let me know? remember the time when—

He: We're talking about now. Why do you always have to bring up an ancient history?

She: It's always like that, one rule for you, another for me. Why?

He: (silence)

She: (Silence)

She :(Silence)

.....A tableau of silence: three people, inside their chest small black boxes, holding inside them smaller, blacker boxes. Secrets packed in secrets....The secret of their own self, already pollinated by time spores waiting to burst open when they are least prepared for it. (69-70)

There are italics scripts—interior monologues, aphorisms and certain verbal expressions in interrogative tone and tenor that give emphatic stokes to the dilemma and anguished thoughts of the character caught between two forces. Sunil's narration of a love story to the infant Dayita is combined with the expression of the secret feelings he has towards Sudha and of the irritation and aversion towards his wife. Sunil's perversity in thinking exemplifies not only in the freaky and carefree attitude of Americanized Indians but the

boldness they pick up in a land unseen by their conservation and traditional bound Indian relatives:

Underneath the measured rise and fall of his story telling voice are hidden phrases like small explosions. Anju feels their reverberation. Tried my best to love you, can't control this, driving me insane.

....

Can't forget her. In my blood like a disease. Can't live this way anymore. Anju sees that her attempts to interrupt the story are futile....

Don't hold me back from. My last chance at being happy.

.... Let me go before I start hating you.(234-235)

Sudha at the time of her departure to India bids farewell in a remorseful manner and her unspoken thoughts are given as follows:

What shall we do about the love that's lost, the love that can never be recovered all the way? I'm so tired of being angry, of being lonely.

This good-bye is so unlike the previous ones, so sadly tinged with relief.

What shall we do with our unwanted desires, which is also our grief?

I don't know, I don't know. (367)

A poetical tone overcoats Sudha's emotional bidding. Rhythm in '*of being angry, of being lonely*' '*relief*' and '*grief*' and repetition of '*I don't know*' demonstrates the lyrical quality of the poet, Chitra. Such poetical diction exists throughout this novel.

Anju, in a fit of fury makes blatant remarks while having a discussion with women writers on movies about India. Chitra to make her verbal statements emphatic and to defend her homeland, which she considers as a compulsive need, uses calligraphy in italics:

No, we don't eat monkey brains. Or bugs either. Yes, we do worship Goddess Kali, but not usually by sacrificing virgins....

Yes we do have street children. Yes, they really live hard lives. Yes the police are brutal. Yes, famine happens, and then people starve. Yes, widows are often repressed. Wives also. But there's a lot more to India than what you're seeing here...(214)

Anju or any other women character of Chitra strive "to throw the baggage of their culture and create a new identity"(Chopra,2011) but during that process they are not ready to cast off Indianness from their inner self. Chitra includes every elements of culture and tradition in her writings as they are "... the set of ethnic particularities that embody national mythology....," (Chih-Yun Chiang, 2010) as well the assets to ascertain her identity. She dares to negate "the history of stereotypes being perpetuated by white writers and very, very reductive narratives...." (Shriver, 2016) written against Indian writers. Her wrathful reflections of mood is perceived in her choice of words like "*No, we don't eat monkey brains. Or bugs either.*" We understand that her character, Anju self perpetrates a mood of agony all the while. The assignments-in lesser font size-that are prepared by Anju though sound irrelevant facilitate us to have a better knowledge about Anju's inner turmoil.

Some of the segments of the novel written in the dynamic prose form describe not only the minds of characters but also the course of the action in both logic and illogic sequence. Her language swamped with certain Metaphors, allusions from Hindu mythology, culinary references, nostalgic dreams, folk songs of the Bengal countryside, idioms and Hindi terms that are widely used throughout the novel, though ethereal and imperceptible for the foreign readers, are considered to be the significant medium that gives the novel its powerful ability to reflect new realities- all about the Diaspora. In the same way the authors' depiction of Americanized society – scrupulous geographical details of the place the characters live or visit, their societal behavior at odd situations, the record of events that created American history, and the exceptional dialectic usage baffle Indian readers and sound avant-garde. It is also surprising to find the author, taking a contrast stand in order to satiate the foreign readers. Indian readers should understand that her writings are the reverberations of a typical diaspora writer and at the same time she is accountable to please the western readers. She makes us clearly understand that it is not necessary to be completely Indian in writings or writing for Indians only. In the words of Shuklas, her writings cater to global

readers and they are a “happy blend of the East and the West and which need not be dominantly oriental” (Shukla, 2006).

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Brief autobiography of the author

Dr.M.Poonkodi working in Karunya Institute of Technology and Sciences (Deemed to-be-University) has been teaching English language and literature in many colleges under various capacities for 28 years. She has published 24 articles in Conferences and journals; presented 39 papers in seminars/conferences/workshops as a delegate and a resource person; organised 1 International and 3 national Conferences. Her area of specialization is Indian writing in English. As a Research Supervisor she has guided 7 Ph.D Scholars (6 ongoing) and 8 M.Phil Scholars.