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## PORTRAYAL OF INDIAN CULTURE AND TRADITION IN THE NOVELS OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

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### Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a writer of international fame and eminence. She has immigrated to the USA but the fragrance of Indian culture and tradition always exists in her novels. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicts the portrayal of Indian culture and tradition through her novels as *The mistress of spices*, *Sister of my heart*, *The Vine of Desire*, *Queen of Dreams*, and *Oleander Girl* have been taken for the study of elements concerned with Indian culture and Tradition. The study further explores how the various character in these novels reflect the colours of Indian tradition in their general way, rituals, and customs. Mrs. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni apart from her contemporary.

**Keywords :** Cultural Tradition, ritual, custom, worried manifestation.

Indian culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world. India's culture has its value. It originated from the ancient Vedic culture of the Indus valley civilization. However, Indian culture is based on the tenants and principles of spiritualism. Indian culture is different from western culture. In the Indian culture, Hindu belief in the theory of karma and rebirth Indian culture and tradition plays an important role in the lives of humans. India is called 'Hindustan'. Divakaruni shows in her novels that the people how culture and tradition, religion, ecology play an important role in the life of man, the focus on the value of culture and tradition in

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a particular society and how culture and tradition are helpful in the inner or external problems of human life.

India is a land of varied forms of culture. Indian people are divided into many different cultures and traditions, castes, religions. Indian people feel proud of their own cultural and traditional identity wherever they go.

Divakaruni' s novel *The Mistress of Spices* is the most important. In this novel, the novelist has shown the value of spices in human life. Tilo is a major character. She knows about the value of spices like medical properties. She could manage the spices shop which is the symbol of primitive cultural value. Tilo introduced herself saying that she was the mistress of spices, and seemed to ask the readers whether they had forgotten old secrets of their mother. Her mother knew about the medical value of spices at home. Indian women use turmeric on their faces, so that vain more shining on a beautiful face. Tilo reveals the benefits of turmeric and also provides instruction as to how to use on the face. She says.

"Rub it on cheek, forehead, and chin. Don' t be hesitant for a thousand years before history began brides and those who long to be brides have done the same. It will erase blemishes and wrinkles, suck away age and fat. For days afterward, your skin will give off a pale golden glow" (M. S.13).

Indian people believe in luck, so they hang mango leafage at the gateway for good luck. In this way, Tilo hung the mango leafage at her shop gateway for good luck and she told a customer about Indian sweets such as Burfies, Rasgullas, and Laddoos. These things are the projections with old Indian culture.

"This is what the customers see as they enter, ducking under plastic green mango leaves strung cover the door for luck" (M.S.4)

*Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In this novel, Divakaruni unholds in detailed Indian culture, tradition,

religion, rituals and customs, and how nature is the part of their life. In this novel, there are three major characters three women the girls' mothers and their aunt. The three old women tell the girl that they should follow Indian culture and tradition, customs, and religion in their life. Pishi was a minor character and she is a widow beautiful. She is aunt of Sudha and Anju. She tells them stories about her own life. She lost her husband at the age of eighteen years. According to Indian customs, she was wearing a white dress, and her grazing hair cut close to her scalp in orthodox style because she was a widow. She maintained her relations with girls and their mother, she gave equal love to both Anju and Sudha. Pishi faced many problems in her life, she felt that her luck is very bad and cruel. But she fought against the odds of life. Now, Pishi Ma negatively replies that they were not so lucky when Sudha asks whether she had heard something. Pishi shook her head in regret and she felt that the Bidhata Purush had not come for girl babies. She said,

“But I have heard the whispers often enough to complete it in my head, for girl-babies who are so much bad luck that they cause their fathers to die even before they are born” (S.M. 18)

*The Vine of Desire* is a sequel to the novel **Sister of my Heart**. In this novel, there are many characters but Sudha and Anju are the protagonists. In Indian culture and tradition, Indian people observe so many ceremonies, particularly for birth and death. It is a special aspect which describes the culture of our country. When cremation rites of Sunil's father were being performed in *The Vine of Desire*, Sunil comes back to Calcutta of his father's death. He reached the Kali temple and the priest told him about the cremation rites the soul of his father rest in peace.

“The river ‘Ganga’ is grey with an age of weight. It has travelled a long way [...] to this city populated by too many people, all their histories and hopes. Their deaths for that's what they bring to the river here, by the Kali

temple. Flower and food offered to the spirits of ancestors who, however, it is believed, on its banks until sent on with prayers". (V.D.324)

After the death of his father. According to Indian culture, he wears the dresses cotton dhoti which mourning sons traditionally wear and left these shoes in the car. He knew that his mother would be displeased with him if he denied performing the rites to bring peace to the soul of his father, he silently followed what the priest asked him to do by the riverside. He sat and took some Sesame seeds in his hand and sprinkled them in the burning fire in obedience to the priest. To feed the fourteen generations of his ancestors he held some balls of cooked rice in his hands. His sense of belief in those rites was under the clouds. The priest recites:

“Weapons cleave It not, the fire burns it not water wets it not, winds burns it not,[....]it is time to pour the ashes into the water. He holds out the copper pot. Ash falls from his hands. Some of it blows into his eyes and makes them water. He wipes at them. The priest nods with approval at this sign of filial piety.”. (V.D.27-28).

In the *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni gives the importance of culture and tradition. There are many elements of culture as food, clothing, and customs so on. Mostly Indian people are careful of their own culture and they maintain their own culture wherever they go. Mrs. Gupta's lifestyle is Indian and herself dresses in a sari or salwar, kameez. She maintains her own Indian culture. In *Queen of Dream*, Rakhi says –

“At home, we rarely ate anything but Indian; that was the one way in which my mother kept the culture” (Q. D 8). When Rakhi asked her mother about reality but her mother was preparing to fulfil the desire of her daughter. She explains the preparation of the foods in such a way that it creates an appetite for the reader. The following are some of the pieces of evidence for it.

“She’s careful with the Muffins she’s setting out on their tray: Chocolate, chips, blueberry, bran, carrot, and almond.[...] Next to them are Lemon glazed Danishes, and then a plate of the crumbly sugar and cinnamon cookies”.( Q.D.24)

Rakhi’s mother did not let her identity as a dream-teller come out as an obstacle between her role as a mother and a wife, and her interest in cooking, Rakhi’s mother Mrs. Gupta maintains Indian culture.

Mr. Gupta explained about his past that he became famous for his excellent cooking. When his family faces a financial problem, then he joined in a Keshto shop. Keshto was kind to him. He told him about his special recipes, sharing with him little secrets that would give them their special flavor. He learned how to make rasgullas and pakoras mix and so on. He continued to learn about the most difficult dishes from keshto he knew we made rubric, where milk is boiled and thickened, cooled, and it is made to outflow, layer by slow layer. We made resgullas, payesh, which are two sweets in one, the fluffy white balls floating in a thick, delicious cream.

*Oleander Girl* is another example of the reflection of the Indian society. The Indian people are divided into many several cultures and traditions, castes, and religions. Cultural tradition and morality take an important role in the novel. Indian people believe in and understand the values of human life and Indian culture. If Indian people live in a foreign land they are living like an Indian family system which was mingled by love, affection, and sentiments. However Indian parents are not like American parents. In *Oleander Girl* Divakaruni refers to the child marriage through the character of Asif who is a servant in Raja’s house . He recounts his childhood life spent with his sister . He blames his society for child marriage, but Indian people should not permit their girls to marriage to strange men. Because they followed Indian culture for their sakes.

In this way, Indian old people are a saver of their own Indian culture and tradition. So they do not allow others to smear their own culture. Bimal Roy is a perfect typical Indian character in the oleander girl.

In Indian culture, pre-marital pregnancy is a sin and crime for their culture. In modernity, they are not ready to follow their culture in recent days.

A classic Indian woman is beautifully desirable through the major character Korobi. Indian woman uses many inclined to contexts products to enhance their beauty. They have long hair, according to Indian culture and tradition they wearing dresses like sari, ornamental gold, and wearing the bindi on their forehead in the traditional way. Indian women's portrayal in Indian society.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's main focuses on Indian culture and tradition. She assimilates her personal and social experience through the characters of her novel. That is why her characters follow Indian customs, rituals, and manners. She truly depicts her pain and pleasure, and their behaviour. While living in a foreign land. Her novels are a vivid medium to convey the cultural elements and also the problems faced by immigrants due to their geographical and socio-cultural dislocation.

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