



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 12, Issue 05, 2023: 13-23

Article Received: 04-07-2023

Accepted: 30-07-2023

Available Online: 04-08-2023

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18533/jah.v12i05.2377>

Migration and Exile in the Short Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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ABSTRACT

Background: The proposed paper focuses on the exploration of the psyche of a female migrant in the short fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni whose fictional world grapples with exilic predicaments. The paper aims to analyse themes of exile, alienation, isolation and displacement. The paper through closed textual reading reflects on the reconstruction of identities through a conscious change of 'self' in the protagonists.

Problem Statement: The question on the identity of an exile remains paradoxical such as where a female migrant truly belongs, who they are and struggles over finding a physical space called 'home'. A fusion of cultures being productive for one could mean rejection, anguish, possible suicide and death for the other.

Methods: The paper is an attempt to integrate interpretative, exploratory, critical and thematic analysis. These methodologies are utilized to examine diasporic themes of exile, the fractured psyche of the female in migration and questions on identity reconstruction.

Key Findings: Reconstitution of identities leads to the creation of a 'new hybrid culture'. This broadens their horizons and enables them to seek gender equality and take up larger challenges of life as a catalyst of 'societal evolution'. They hold onto their familial tradition on one hand while grasping liberalism, professional mobility and renewed cultural mores in transnational spaces.

Contributions: Even in exile, the female migrant has made enormous contributions, advancement and progression in their host country with commitment and enthusiasm in areas of education, technology, science, engineering, arts etc. They have patronized and venture capital support to their country of origin.

Keywords: Alienation, exile, hybrid, identities, transnational.

JEL Classifications: Z11.

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1. Introduction

The article seeks to map the agency, struggles, and the challenges of the migrant particularly women in their endless journey of the reconstruction of identity in a displaced setting. With migration

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studies, the concept of gender becomes the leading edge. It is analysed that women's identity issue remains denigrated even in the present era. Women's endeavors in the acclimation and settlement process are specific and unique to them. Despite the problems of politics, tyranny at home, racial discrimination, and exploitation by men, they recreate culture and home by liberating themselves through educational and employment opportunities overseas. The female in the Indian diaspora struggles in the midst of unequal dynamics related to power hierarchies and gendered hegemony. Meenakshi Thapan's portrayal of women in migration is that:

women also find her in an ambivalent state. She lives in both the traditional and modern worlds; thanks to her upbringing and the education she obtains as well as the visual and print media she is subjected to and the peer culture she is a part of. (2001, p. 361)

Women vacillate between subjugation and freedom. They are in a paradoxical state as they are concerned with the sustenance of tradition and culture, a nodal point in the patriarchal family framework and yet in a subservient condition. Issues of slavery and colonialism, subjugation and imperialism, outsider-insider, oppressed and oppressor, powerlessness and power syndromes have also created problems in identity formation in a diasporic setting. Hence as an outsider, they are driven to anxiety, pain and fear which threatens their sanity and feels trapped in their displacement. It is this alienation and exile that leads to self-definition and self-identification in women's diaspora. Economic independence allows them to redefine their 'self-perception' and roles in a patriarchal society. With migration, a changing order appears to surface with a quantum jump in women's economic conditions.

Elaine Showalter's female phase can be compared to the women in the stories who are able to emerge out of their repressed and suppressed beings and acquire self-hood and self-actualization. This third phase comprises of 'self-discovery' and the quest for emancipation. Despite living in uncertainties and turbulent times due to rigid societal norms, women have played a significant role to search for meaning, stability and security in life and create a new literary trend of budding new women writers in the post-modern era.

The first section comprises of literature review which serves as a background, overview sources and major writings on the selected topic. It sheds light on survey gaps that restrict the scope of well-grounded outcomes. The concepts of identity and exile are paradoxical with ambiguous etymology.

Research Methodologies employed in the article cover the second section. Methods are interpretative, critical methods are interpretative, critical, analytical and exploratory to achieve the research objectives. It entails research questions on how the women in migration go through a re-definition of the self. A state of exile reflects the conflicts experienced by Indian women writers in establishing their negotiated identities and proclaimed self-hood.

In the third section, I introduce the concepts of migration, exile and how they intersect. The various forms of migration and exile are studied and the impact they have on female dispositions. Migration is not just confined to physical displacement alone but accommodates emotional attachments to the 'homeland'. Exile refers to not just forced expulsion or banishment from one's country but also manifest feelings of alienation, a relational break-up or surviving catastrophic rejection.

The fourth section of my article delivers a brief background to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and her art of storytelling. The two selected anthologies are introduced.

The fifth section weaves a complex account of the fractured psyche, exilic dislocation and transformation in the female protagonists which leads to questions on identity and re-rooting. The two short fictions are delineated with close textual analysis.

The sixth section reports the research findings. The article arrives at outcomes interpreted in a logical sequence. The contextual analysis includes how the hybrid culture creates a third space where the female migrant adopts a fluid identity and liberates herself from the shackles of repressed cultural traditions and male hegemony. Cultures can never be pure due to Westernization, industrialization and colonisation.

The section that highlights the contribution and policy implications of the article is the seventh one. This part makes the article worth reading. It presents facts on the immense contribution of the female diaspora while being in exile. Policy implication involves that any kind of forced expulsion or involuntary deportation of a female writer must seek protection from her home country as a human

right to continue to live in their country of origin. The freedom of writers, authors, and artists should not be threatened, face arbitrary persecution or denial to life itself.

The last section concludes on the wings of hopes and aspirations. The female migrant integrates and acculturates with the host society and balances the dilemmas of the 'two-sandwich world' with one foot in the Indian plain and the other in the host land.

The review article aims to answer the following research questions:

1: How the themes of exile and identity constructions are paradoxical and open to many interpretations.

2: How the ordeals of exilic moments and struggles enhance the perceptions of 'self' in migrant women.

3: How in a state of exile and alienation the female establishes recognition of truth and brings about the dynamic transformation of the inner 'self' through restructuring of identities in a new land.

2. Literature review

Studies on diaspora and the shifting of millions of immigrants since World War II have been rampant. Authors, critics and researchers have made a huge contribution to immigrant literature which has exploded the literary field.

In the survey on diasporic literature with themes on migration and exile, this research explored the literature available with critical studies on Chitra Banerjee.

The researcher has collected useful data from various digital libraries, journals, review articles, books and thesis for the current study.

Joel Kuortti's book *Writing Imagined Diasporas South Asian Women Reshaping North American Identity* (2007) highlights the works of eleven female writers from Canada and the United States in contemporary times. The book is divided into two parts: identities formed in the diaspora of North America and the second section includes divergent diaspora groups intersecting transnationalism.

Eva Pataki, a Hungarian writer, expresses the inner conflicts in familial bonds. She quotes Maria Kozar, another scholar from Hungary in her thesis on ordeals of assimilation:

...assimilation is an integrative process within the family and between generations and is not socially and culturally equitable, thus resulting in hybridity and confusion of cultural identity. The assimilation of the first generation is never complete, they are in an in-between state where they have not integrated the new culture yet. On the other hand, the second generation tends to aim at total assimilation by breaking away from the roots and traditions (2015, p. 2).

Khachig Tölöyan work "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment" provide a theoretical framework for diaspora studies. According to him, diaspora or dispersal is a favourable and constructive word that connotes proliferation and power. It was first used in the Hebrew Bible Septuagint, which is a Greek version of the Torah in the context of Jewish exile, dispersal and banishment from their native land. The historical reference to diaspora corresponds to dislocation and displacement with "ethnocidal violence" (Tölöyan, 1996, p. 12).

Hellen Cixou's work *The Laugh of the Medusa* is a call and sermon for a mode of writing which is feminine. She calls it 'white ink' or 'écriture féminine'. She advocates the following in her work: "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" (1976, p. 875).

Stuart Hall, Jamaica-British Sociologist expresses identity in the modern era as: "identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, other intersections and antagonistic, discourse practices and positions" (1996, p. 4).

The literature review on migration emphasizes that the feminist philosophy did not include the scope of migrant women in its canvas. Later, theories on migration incorporated experience and issues of women under feminine influence. Women were passive agents till the 1970s and according to Boyd and Grieco, migrant was a term which "largely stood for male migrant and their families that included their wives and children (2003).

Through literature, it is ascertained that plenty of work has been done on diasporic themes and South Asian Women but short fiction as a genre has recently been paid attention to.

However, the existing paper identifies the key areas that need further studies:

1: Concepts of identity construction and exile are concerns of immigrant communities. These terms restrict the scope of well-grounded outcomes. The terms are paradoxical with ambiguous etymology.

2: If migration and exile are harrowing experiences then assimilation will be the main obstacle.

3: There are female migrants, whose diasporic cognizance might entirely disappear. They do not have a home or a host land for continuing cultural 'milieu'. This field of research requires primary data collection through demographic studies. This includes ethnographic 'interviews' and survey methods to acquire data on such remote communities. They have no memory of home and are at the margins in displaced land.

3. Research methodology

The present paper is based on qualitative research with integration of interpretative, exploratory, analytical, thematic and critical methods. The two anthologies constitute the primary data that are studied with integrated methodologies as mentioned since the concepts of identity, exile and home are paradoxical and open to many interpretations. Hence, it is crucial to understand that this social phenomenon requires critical, exploratory and thematic analysis to gain new perspectives and insights into the diasporic groups and their behavior.

The research methodology seeks to achieve the following aims and objectives:

1: How the experience of migrancy and exile is painful, and the challenges lie in acculturation and assimilation.

2: How women in the migration and resettlement process redefine their roles and lives.

3: How the female diaspora adopts and adapts to the host country and maintains a link with the country of origin.

4: How identities are hybrid and hyphenated that intersect nations, races, classes and gender.

5: Analyses will be made to show how exile affects the female transnational writers' imagination and sensibilities, as both a liberating and a shocking experience.

6: How even when being in exile, the diasporic writers are useful to society, serving it to the best of their abilities, aspiration and talents.

4. Migration and exile: Concepts and intersections

Migration is termed as a movement where races and people migrate from one place to another and become displaced groups. It can be forced or wilful. Forced migration is a consequence of natural calamities, expulsion, banishment or war. A search for better opportunities and socio-economic life, results in wilful migration. In either case, migration leads to nostalgia, memory of the homeland, rootlessness, agony and pain in a new brazen world. International Organization for Migration considers the word migrant as polysemic in nature and puts forward the following views:

No universally accepted definition (for migrants) exists. As a rule of thumb, people's conceptions of what it means to be a "migrant" expanded to include anybody who moves from one place to another "for personal convenience" without being forced to do so by circumstances beyond their control. Migrants are defined by the United Nations as anybody who has lived in another nation for more than a year, whether their presence there was choice or involuntary, permanent or temporary. (2019, p. 286)

The origin of the word exile in Latin is derived from *exsilire* - It means 'leap out'. The word exile in Latin is called *exilium*. It refers to people who have left their 'space' forcibly for an extended and undetermined time. The theme of exile in the diaspora literature of Chitra Banerjee creates the anxiety of 'displacement' and 'place' in the mind of her characters. It brings forth a crisis in identifying the relationship between 'place' and 'self'. Edward Said in *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994) stresses on "Voluntary" or "Involuntary" (p. 39) exile. Chitra Banerjee's protagonist also suffers from internal and external exile. Internal exile is defined as a forced relocation inside one's nation, whereas external exile is described as a deportation from one's home country. ("Exile", 2017, para 1). Exile can have many causes or circumstances, but its consequences are deep emotional anguish. Leaving one's country or homeland signifies breaking the crucial familial, community and environmental bonds. The heart of

mankind cannot become whole once they deflect from reuniting with places and people they have cherished since childhood. *The Oxford Book of Exile* (1995) provides insight into the term exile:

... fall apart from your cosy nest, away from your loving family and friends, and thrust into a harsh new world, whether your captor is the Angel of God or Stalin's NKVD: That is what it means to be an exile. Even the name "world" evokes feelings of despair and isolation, of giving in to an overpowering force, of waiting for what seems like an eternity for nothing in return. Victor Hugo used the phrase "a long dream of home" to describe life in exile. (Simpson, p. 1)

5. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as a storyteller

Chitra Banerjee is a remarkable feminist writer of the Indian diaspora belonging to the Twenty-First Century. She is a unique storyteller especially of women immigrants by casting a spell through her short fiction. Her talent lies in her narrative technique, synthesis of lyricism, realism, symbolism and magic realism. Her stories give expression to tragic, disordered immigrant lives who are scuffling to constitute themselves in a new, unfamiliar and contemporary civilization. Her female migrants negotiate between the two diverse worlds of tradition and the desire to fulfil their ambition that education propels them to achieve. Chitra Banerjee's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) is an anthology of eleven short stories that focus on themes of arranged marriage, displacement, isolation, tradition versus modernity, domestic violence, divorce, East-West encounter, acculturation, in-betweenness, alienation, migration, racism, estrangement, nostalgia, identity crisis, and self-discovery.

It became a bestseller and awarded her the American Book Award and PEN Josephine Miles Award. Her stories explore the conflicts between familial love and sexual desire; compromise and hope; the demands of contemporary moments and renunciation of memory; the person one was and the one becoming. She draws on aesthetic interconnectivity which reflects in her narrative mode interlaced with thematic concerns. *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), her second collection of short tales, explores the condition of women at historical and current cultural crossroads. The title reflects a paradox. The characters in the stories do not have full control of their lives and falter in taking directions. Fate also plays an important role in their life. Conflicts can be seen in the stories in way of cultural ethos, existence and negotiating boundaries. The two short fictions portray violence in domestic life that forms a pattern. They document the life journey of the hapless victims hovering towards a common cognizance of 'selfhood'. Pallavi Rastogi said of her stories that "Divakaruni's art has frequently strived to give voice to immigrant Indian women," (2010, p. 35).

6. Exploration of the psyche with reconstruction of identities (Close textual analysis)

Charles Margrave Taylor, a Canadian philosopher remarks: "to know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand.... It is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand" (1996, p.11).

Identity has to do with the consciousness of an individual of a trait which can be related to his/her race, group, religion or nation. It has to do with recognition of a role one has to play inside or outside the domain of society. It is the crisis in identity formation in the 'self' that accelerates distress and confusion. A sense of exile and alienation clenches the psyche of women trapped in an emotional, psychological, spiritual and cultural vacuum. Diasporic literature is very evocative to identify and search for revelatory existence and adapt to a new 'cultural cradle' for kinship and inclusion.

"The Disappearance" is a story from the anthology *Arranged Marriage* that outlines the chronicle of an unnamed, beautiful and educated wife living in America. It draws out the anxiety of a woman migrant with endless dilemmas of adaptation in a transcultural backdrop. Her husband adheres to patriarchal domination and has an aversion to change and acclimatization. In retrospect, he only remembers his future wife as "almost disinterested, almost as though she were wondering if he would make a suitable spouse" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 171). He is aware of her cold reception of him. When he made sexual advances towards her, she would gently refuse in silence, "for grabbing her by the elbow and pulling her to the bed, like he did that last night" (Divakaruni, 1995, p.172). However, after a while, she would stop resisting and give in to his wishes. That, however, was not a novel occurrence. The issue of 'marital rape' seems to be a significant rift in the couple's relationship. He muffled her screams. Sidney W. Finkelstein defines wife bearings as "a psychological phenomenon, an internal conflict, a hostility felt towards something seemingly outside oneself which is linked to oneself, a barrier erected

which is no defence but an improvement of oneself" in his book *Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature* (1998, p. 137).

The wife's estrangement from her husband comes from her loss of independence, his sense of callousness towards her and the chasm between the host culture and her home culture. Labor done in the absence of one's choice makes her alienated from her own 'self'. It becomes natural, that a woman who is a product of cultural plurality imbibes the nuances of alien culture. The stagnant, staunch 'home culture' is what she turns away from. Her silent and unannounced disappearance from her husband's house, at last, shows her exigency to lead an independent life, to liberate herself from the grasp and burden of domestic life. It is through the experience of loneliness and exile that she becomes an 'unhoused wanderer'. Edward Said further reiterates the plight of the female wanderer: "...and just beyond the boundary between us and the outsiders in the dangerous zone of not- belonging; This is where people were expelled in prehistoric times, and wherein the contemporary day enormous aggregates of humanity linger as refugees and displaced persons." (Divakaruni, 2012, pp. 176-77).

The wife in the story suffers a 'terminal loss' of home where she may never go back. Does this signify a potent- sense of transformation and enriching motif of contemporary culture? The essayist and critic George Steiner in his article "In Times of Migrants: Art for a World Without Territory" (2020) calls the entire Western literature of the Twentieth Century genre as 'extraterritorial'- literature of exile, an age symbolic of refugee. The 'quasi-barbarism' of the age has made many 'homeless'. The wife too liberates herself from the shackles of patriarchy and turns aloof and a 'homeless wanderer'. Patriarchy stands detached, mute, unconcerned, and motionless towards the female's lacerated psyche and sensibility.

The story "Clothes" from the anthology *Arranged Marriage* has a narrator Sumita, a young Bengali girl who married Somesh Sen, "he is coming all the way from California" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 18). They both dreamt of an affluent and glorious life ahead. Her married life in America fails to modify her life for the better as the family reconciles to culture and tradition. She is overcome with domestic chores as experienced in her home country. Chitra Banerjee through the story spans the realms of a female character as being confined to her husband, in-laws, home and relationships. Her subordination continues even after migration "often Somesh leaves as soon as he has dinner and doesn't get back till after I've made morning tea for Father and Mother Sen" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 28). The story "Clothes" is a metaphor for displaying one's identity and personality. It symbolizes the aspirations, dreams, fortune and misfortune of a migrant female.

She undergoes a drastic transformation with the sudden demise of her husband at his store 7-Eleven. "Last night, someone walked into the shop.... My partner was shot in the chest before he departed" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 30). She eventually discards the white sari and "wears a blouse and skirt the colour of almonds" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 33), expertly incorporating the idea and picture of clothing into the story. She is caught in the crossfire of two cultures and ideologies. "Widows in white saris, their heads covered, serve tea to their in-laws if you return to India. Doves with their wings lopped off" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 33). Here, Sumita as a 'migrant widow' forced upon herself a new life which was not known to her. Old relations will unfold in new bonds, steeped in a new culture. Sumita's going back would prove futile and her journey 'homeward' seems impossible. She knows a widow in India has to shave her head; her shadow is considered ominous and inauspicious. A dreary, dreadful life is what is prescribed for a widow. They are excluded from all happy and religious occasions. It is like a death sentence in India. She is prepared for "arguments of the coming weeks, the remonstrations" (33). She finds her present land "dangerous" (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 33) too. She is tragically wavering between relocation and dislocation, not able to feel being home either way. The theme of exile prevails upon her as a sense of acute concern and predicaments of 'place' and 'displacement'. Homi Bhabha in *Location of Culture* observes the notion of 'interstitial' people or those who suffer 'cultural ambivalence' and he elaborates:

It demands an encounter with something that is not part of our everyday experience. As a kind of subversive cultural translation, it fosters a feeling of the novel. This kind of artwork refreshes the past by reconfiguring it as a contingent "in-between" zone, which invents and disrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' evolves into a practical, rather than sentimental, aspect of life. (1994, p. 7)

Chitra Banerjee advocates 'protest voices' through her female protagonists who need to be heard. Her stories are open-ended with no validating solutions, yet her outpours are certainly loud, unambiguous and overt.

The story "The Bats" is an archetype of a female in exile. The term exile could also include abandonment and being deserted. The story focuses on Indian women who are not expatriates or migrants yet are in exile, at home. To be in exile, one need not be away from one's country. The mother in the story is demarginalized in her homeland. The theme in the story is her bicultural life struggling to free herself from the clutches of cultural pulls. In the disenchanting prison of her home. She gropes to rediscover her fractured identity. She suffers domestic violence and aggression at the hands of her husband. "A larger and more bluish-red mark appeared on mom's face a couple of days later. It was off-center on her forehead, giving her an uneven appearance." (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 3). The story reveals an isolated woman pitted against patriarchy and society. When it comes to her identity, it evokes an appalling conflict between reality and illusion. It is the internal exile which is the damning of all exiles. Here, the exile is alienated in their home country. 'Home' for Chitra Banerjee becomes a 'space' which is constantly provisional and in-the-making. A helpless woman with her only daughter takes refuge in Grandpa-Uncle's home far away in a village.

A continuous state of exile and alienation exists as she fails to experience a sense of belongingness at either place. Her daughter is a bystander to her mother's sorrow and sobbing. A letter of promise from her husband brings her back home. The hegemony continues its brutalities "Mother followed me along the brighter hallway, holding the wadded end of her sari to her face, blood oozing through its white like a black, crumpled flower we hadn't dared to turn on the light over." (Divakaruni, 1995, p. 16).

In modern times, exile as an experience is a metaphor for alienation. It exemplifies a feeling which advocates the 'need' as well as the 'loss' of time. Chitra Banerjee's short fiction delineates how exile is a common malady for a woman in question. Through her literary lens, she draws out the true portrait of the hidden realities and lives of displaced Indian immigrants and non-immigrants.

"In "The Intelligence of Wild Things," a story from the book *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*, portrays the rift between the family members and a sense of isolation and homesickness experienced by them. The narrator is a young married woman, who plays the role of conciliator between her brother and dying mother. It is the intervention of all-pervasive death that enables the sister to reclaim the past and collectively recreate a history, lapsed connection and rekindle inarticulate love. "We're all groping about in subway caves, scraping our skin raw on the stone, hoping to find the sliver of an entrance that leads to love." (Divakaruni, 2001, p. 53). The narrator sketches the trip to Vermont to implore her younger brother Tarun to meet his dying mother in India. She brings him to recall all his childhood memories when he was attached to his mother. Forced and involuntary migration yields a state of emotional void and complete estrangement from work, self, people and surroundings in him. It was on his mother's persistence to flee the Naxalites in Calcutta that he had to leave his city in a state of turmoil: "He seems to be completely alone in the desolate countryside as he stares at it intently. Perhaps, however, with his hipster jeans and army surplus jacket, he blends in with the rest of the males on the ship and doesn't stand out to me at all. His entirely American countenance, even when his eyes are closed," (Divakaruni, 2001, p. 41).

The sister grapples to reconstruct the fragmented relations as she is guilt-struck for being negligent towards her younger brother due to her familial duties: "I hated this diminishment of my sense and my inability to comprehend clearly." (Divakaruni, 2001, p. 43). The devouring stoicism, flagging breath and chaotic emotions of the brother recede slowly, "then he puts his arm around my shoulders and gives them a brief, awkward hug" (Divakaruni, 2001, p. 53).

It is said that exiles are kind of eccentrics, neurotics who profess to be orphans. It is an allegory of a 'prodigal son' who suffers deportation and treachery. The brother in the story not only holds back enormous roaring desolations but also his tears. The 'ebbing' mother might cure his spiritual debacle. This could be the turning point in his life to heal and recover from past wounds and retrieve his lost 'self'. Identity formation in the host land calls for identification with one's past. Recognizing the past leads to continuity and consistency. Richard Hinton Thomas in his book *Literature in Upheaval: West German Writers and the Challenge of the 1960s* remarks:

What applies to the individual applies no less to his history [...] If the self is disposable then, so too is the course of history. If the identity of the self is not inherent, the pattern of history is not, either. If one can reconstruct and readjust the self, according to desire and circumstance, then one can manipulate history (1994, p. 29).

The female migrant in the stories not only depicts pain and suffering but also their emergence as a strong gender voice who struggles and defies all odds and setbacks. They are in a continuous search of 'self' and keep evolving in a male-gendered world. This review article bears testimony to the fact that Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has successfully used her fictional women characters to become agents of transformation and take control of their existence. They maintain their link with their mother country through marriage, tradition and culture. Even in exile, they refuse to sever cultural ties with their motherland.

7. Findings

The cultural views disseminated through the writings of female diasporic authors are aligned with their surroundings and circumstances which could have otherwise remained buried within their native land. Through their literary output- conflicts, dissonance, cultural clashes and ambivalence are brought to the forefront.

The term 'reconstruction of identity' involves the exchange and mix of hybrid cultures with a conscious and calculated breakdown of homogeneity. There is a creation of a third space. This cultural space created is ambivalent but will also help us to override the fact that multiculturalism is not exotic or alien.

The idea of home is a metaphor for a 'safe haven' where one's psychological and emotional metadata is entrenched and invested.

Almost all societies and cultures have lost their purity and identity due to colonization and modernization.

Women migrants in the host land are at a disadvantage position with issues like marital discord, physical domestic abuse, familial or work insecurities or exploitation of any kind. As state interventions on 'Migrant Women Welfare Programs' are a difficult proposition.

Migrant women face better opportunities, financial independence and enhanced status in the public sphere in the host land. They are exposed to other cultures which have a liberating effect on them.

The new 'hybrid culture' broadens their horizons and visions, enabling them to seek gender equality and take up larger challenges of life for greater societal evolution. They retain their familial customs while adapting to new cultural mores in transnational spaces.

An exile seems to embody both curse and blessing, lost and found homes. What we see is that the exile's innermost and deepest progression manifests through their art and artistic production. They have the alacrity to invent, initiate, and innovate in new settings.

Lastly, the female needs to construct her literary renderings where she creates her own distinctive and exclusive 'space' which is devoid of cultural hegemony, enslavement and ghettoization. The third space is ambivalent yet full of opportunities. Cultural fluidity should mitigate national boundaries and being called an 'other' or 'outsider'. Home is no longer a geographical notion but rather a safe, emotional and ideological sanctuary.

8. Contributions and policy implications

It is seen that even in exile, the female diaspora has made immense contributions, advancement and progression of their host country with allegiance and fervor in areas of science, technology, education, engineering and arts etc. They have volunteered to sponsor financial funding for their homeland.

Policy Implications: Artists must have the right to freedom of expression. In the present time, there is a burgeoning of violations on the 'creative activities' of an artist. This paper calls against forced displacement or expulsion of artists who face digital harassment, intimidation, asylum and personal attacks on life. Governments, lawmaking bodies, and private and public national and international organizations must collectively strive to promote and protect 'artistic license'.

Women artists are more vulnerable and are expected to comply with societal, religious and political norms. Women who challenge are banned and face exile. Human beings as readers and bystanders must refrain from stifling creativity and violate human rights. They should acknowledge the artist's work in a new light with a moderate approach and altered positive perceptions.

All media, newspapers, magazines etc. should not be biased and divert public and readers' attention from artwork to non-literary matters. They manufacture critical opinions for readers that only damages the worldwide admiration and respect of an artist but even vandalize literature in its entirety since exile literature generates a complex, critical scrutiny of texts.

9. Conclusion

Literature is also a reflection of the artist. The world which appears hostile and cold occasionally signifies the psychological plight of the author with an unmistakable perception that they too have borne the bruises and lesions. It pertains to sociological aspects and studies. The characters in their 'rootlessness' show a penchant to survive and to be free. It is their creative outputs that provides a temporary relief; it is an attempt to escape and cut off from the disharmony of their existence.

The diasporic literature or the Migration theory has failed to deal with the female communities to manage the extent of proximity and distance, participation and indifference while carrying- on the affairs of the host country. The theorists have coined the conception of 'sandwich culture' and that of 'resilience'. These terms complement each other. Resilience acts as a barrier and protects the indigenous culture from external censures and preserves its own national identity. It prevents the fracture or rupture of socio-cultural settings. Resistance could also mean that which disallows reformation. Sandwich culture reflects heterogeneity or a hyphenated subculture. It links the native culture to the alien culture. If the aperture to the native culture is completely closed it leads to alienation and marginalization. On the contrary, if the aperture is widened towards the host culture, it leads to assimilation with a complete loss of parent culture. Hence, the ideal situation would be to adopt a 'double orientation' or two-fold aperture, where migrants are sandwiched in bi-cultural encounters. The flip side could be that this could lead to confusion, rejections and anxiety. A paradoxical condition might prevail in all displaced lives. Acculturation requires assimilation to eliminate indigenous cultural ties. This becomes extremely difficult as negating the past and its shadows would hinder self-transformation. The relocation process is long-term and time-consuming.

The decentralization of cultures and society along with colonization has led to predicaments, ambivalence and broken identities in man. Immigrant sensibilities require the reconstruction of one's psyche. An amicable formula is required which enumerates as follows:

- Plural forces of east and west to be compromised by the migrant wherever necessary.
- Modernity and spirituality need to find a finer balance to re-constitute the psychic dimensions.
- A fusion of personal and social identity is imperative for one to achieve 'wholeness' in identity construction. Personal identity is ascertained by personal attainments and lineage while social identity is rooted in tradition and culture.
- Being in exile or at the margins becomes the fuel and ultimate point to decide. Being soaked in trauma, loss, displacement and isolation can be rectified through spiritual supplications, rituals and mythology of one's native land.
- Identity is evolved through the migrant's association with the two disparate worlds and the revelation that it is not the place but existence that matters. This serves as a defence, an insulation to the incompatible world outside.

It is this experience of loneliness and alienation in migrants that results in self-discovery, self-awareness and progress of the soul. It is an identity crisis in them that leads to self-introspection that emphasizes their present existence.

Humanity thrives on relationships. Home is a 'space' where the exquisite chord of the human heart is linked. Home is more of an ideology characterized by emotions rather than 'geographical residents'. It is at this junction that family bonds prevail. Chitra Banerjee's exploration of conflicts, misunderstandings between generations and value-system affirms that poignancy due to fragmentation of a migrant is more real than geographical or cultural displacement.

The key theme of marriage is interrogated through the short fiction where dominance and atrocity exist in the form of patriarchy. Chitra Banerjee advocates the prospects of doing away with marriage. The stories have woman protagonists who are non-conformists as they revolt against curtailments inflicted upon them by family members and society.

The solution to social dichotomy, clashes between ethnic and Western ideologies and bi-cultural pulls lies in embracing multiculturalism and hyphenated identities. Women need to empower themselves with education and address transnational racial, feminist, and political issues by bringing themselves to write and also create a 'literary culture' for other women. They must fortify themselves as consecrators of their cultural norms and integrate into the host society with harmony, compassion; intense intellectual, behavioral and affective sensibilities. So, when they face conflicts in exilic conditions, it evokes responses that open their eyes to newer ideas and opportunities. They must verbalize their needs and aim to transform into new habitats with a flexible disposition and internal stimulus which is capable of pathbreaking evolution.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, Integral University, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Dean of the Faculty of Doctoral Studies and Research at Integral University for their unwavering encouragement. I wish to convey my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. H. M. Arif. His willingness to provide great insight and the necessary direction and tools to complete my work has been vital to illuminate my path to higher learning. I appreciate Professor T. Usmani's help in obtaining the manuscript communication number is IU/R&D/2023-MCN0002040.

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