

Women in Diaspora : A Study of Diasporic Women in the select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Anita Rao Badami

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Abstract

The post – independence novelists in the 1950s and 60s ushered a new trend of writing in English, and the recent years.

Indian English Literature, witness a new class of affluent, globetrotting, and often diasporic international women writers. They focus on their off springs experience displacement , disintegration, marginalization. The major development in modern fiction has seen the growth of a feminist or woman centred approach. Hence women writers in their fiction have left their indelible imprint on the pages of history and the pathetic condition of Diasporic Women. Women have been part of almost all the groups of people moving out of Indian borders and they have their own experiences under the patriarchal society. Women have proved themselves in transforming the lives of their own and their families holding on to traditions.

Hence this study earnestly brings out the problems of women, experiences in an alien land in the select workers of **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Anita Rao Badami.**

Key words : Feminism – Diaspora – Patriarchy – emigrant – displacement.

In this age of globalization, the terms like transnationals, diasporas, expatriates, migrants, etc have become very common phenomena and the difference between them is often blurred. In recent years, new generations of south Asian women writers have begun to make their unique mark upon the world of Diasporic Literature which comes under the broader realm of post colonial literature. People in diaspora is caught between the two worlds, which negate their belongings to either nation. In short the metaphor of ‘Trishanku’ has been commonly used to define people who live in a state of ‘in-betweenness’ or more precisely the immigrants.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a popular award winning novelist. All her novels centers around women and problems related to women as an immigrant, having faced many experiences of her own. She exposes the immigrant experience of the south Asian women in the US. In her writings she concentrates on the more complexly contoured politics of the oppressed. She fights hard to improve the living condition of the women on the other land. Bharathi Mukherjee deals with how migration and expatriation complicate the lives of Indian American women in the US.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her writings concentrated on women after she left India, where she carefully analysed the condition of women there. In her novel *The Mistress of Spices* the character Tilo provides spices, not only for working, but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants experience. She takes special care to unite people through her writing. She takes new vision to break the so called stereotypes and destroying myths. In doing so she dissolves barriers between people of different culture.

To an interview she openly admits that “I Wrote in a spirit of play, collapsing the division between the realistic world of twentieth century in my attempt to create a modern fable”. Divakaruni adopts a more difficult strategy for presenting diasporic identity. She explores the elements of fable to bring out the problems encountered by immigrants who come to the promised land of “silver pavements and golden roofs”. The central character Tilotama who has trained to extract the essence of the spices and make them work to alleviate pain, some of their problems and help people live better lives”. Divakaruni has captured the unsettled sensibility of Indian women living in the diasporic world. She has beautifully carved the power of tradition in her native country as well as the challenge faced by the immigrants in the settled country. Divakaruni’s writing affirms that diaspora is not merely a dispersion but an experience made up of collectiveness and multiple journeys. It is an obvious fact that almost all the expatriates who emigrated from India to America face the clash of opposing cultures, a feeling of alienation which is followed by the attempts to adjust, to adopt and to

accept. In a nutshell Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni clearly exposes the relationship of women with common problems like alienation, displacement and discrimination.

Bharathi Mukherjee is a strong and eminent Indian diasporic writer settled in US. She celebrates a different diasporic identity in her writings and tries to focus on cross cultural issues. She in her writings illustrates the fluidity of cultural boundaries, migration, ethnicity and globalization or the top of her literary agenda.

In her novels she has beautifully portrayed the immigrants in an alien land and projects their condition in an lovely land. In her novels “Jasmine and wife” she presents the journey of two young women in US under dissimilar circumstances. Both of them pass through torturous physical, mental and emotional agony affecting their whole being to such an extent that they are driven to violence. Though the protagonist Jasmine goes through the worst experiences of her life, she is able to come through the obstacles and attains self – awareness and a new identity and overthrows her past life. Mukherjee has beautifully carved the feelings of diasporic women perfect language one of the newest women writers in the vibrant field of Indian sub – continental literature is Anita Rau Badami. Ms.Badami is a fifty year old former journalist who has been living in Canada since 1991. Her debut novel, *Tamarind mens*, received critical acclaim and made Badami a national bestseller in Canada Caribbean region and she received the Marian Engel award for her second novel, *The Hero’s Walk*.

In her novels Badami expresses her diasporic feelings and also her pleasure of being in the in-between world.

“I don’t think I could have written a novel if I had not left India, “I find that the distance gives me perspective amid passion. I was twenty- nine years in India and ten years here, so I have a foot in India and a couple of toes here. I m both doomed and blessed, to be suspended between two worlds, always looking back, but with two gorgeous places inhabit, in my imagination or my heart.

Though her novels are autobiographical in nature, they are for all. She carefully analyse the immigrant women, who are caught between conflicting forces like caste, gender and culture. As a women in an effective manner she has earnestly brought out the issues related to the difficulties of immigrant women.

After a careful analyses of the select novels of these three women novelists one can find out a pattern in their writings significant and sincere efforts to develop identities of their own independent of any established theory. In the portrayal of women they have broken the conventions and stereotypes and the portraits of transnational women as victims. They have given the readers how their characters have successfully overcome their problems in their novels.

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