



Search for Identity in *Oleander Girl* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract:

The following paper attempts to focus on finding one's identity in *Oleander Girl*. It alludes to the protagonist Karobi's great desire to learn more about her father and her experience as an immigrant. She puts her marriage plans on hold to learn more about her father's heritage, despite the fact that she knows and loves her partner Rajat. The paper also describes Karobi's transformation in India as mild young girl and in America a strong matured woman who is ready to resist if anything goes wrong. It depicts identity conflicts, immigrant problems, and the willpower she develops to raise money to live with financial independence. It emphasises on how Divakaruni empowered the characters via feminism. As an immigrant, she faces cultural difficulties when she travels to America in quest of her father. It depicts how she discovers her father and explores her identity after multiple personal encounters.

Key Words: Identity, Search, Immigrant, Quest, Transformation.

Introduction:

Several writers and critics in postcolonial literature have tackled the search for identity. Because of their cultural and rich traditional history, many people's circumstances play a significant part in their lives. As a result, they are sometimes ostracised and become victims in society and in their families. They themselves wonder, "Who am I?" What country am I from? What am I doing here?" These inquiries cause them to reflect about their lives Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a talented writer who is exposing social realities. She has gotten positive feedback as a writer who has explored hybrid identities in the majority of her novels. Many of her works exhibit autobiographical themes that she utilized artistically in her works. Her works mostly focused on immigrant experiences in India, including travel to other countries, particularly America, for better prospects and standard of living. Her works also challenge the patriarchal dominance in society. In many of her novels, female characters replace male characters. All of her female characters become extremely powerful after realising the truth about their lives. Karobi's cultural adventure has a significant impact on her life.

Karobi Roy, the novel's protagonist, is a 17-year-old girl who lost her mother at infancy. Her grandparents, Bimal Roy and Sarojini, raised her after that Bimal Roy is a prominent individual, a retired barrister with considerable social standing in his community. His wife, Sarojini, also comes from a wealthy background. They are historically and culturally rich, as well as highly regarded in their community. Anu is their only child. She was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States. Her parents are quite hesitant to send her to study in America, particularly her father. Finally, all of his and Karobi's well-wishers implore Bimal Roy to send her, stating it is a fantastic opportunity for Anu to demonstrate her academic abilities and win in her life. As he

receives tremendous motivation from all sides, he agrees to send her to America for her studies. However, Anu promises him not to marry anyone from America. He is frightened because of the multi-culturalism in America, which encourages young people to mingle easily, and Anu may marry, ruining his family's name. Anu, on the other hand, adores Rob and wishes to marry him in America. However, there is a hurdle to marriage in that she has told her father that she will not marry anyone in America. As she becomes pregnant, she longs to visit her parents and asks permission from her mother, Sarojini. When her father, Bimal Roy, accepts, she returns to her home, where she is denied permission to return to America and gives birth to a female child named Karobi before dying. Karobi is raised in their village by her grandparents, who give her the identity of a Bimal Roy family grandchild. She was provided care and was never allowed to inquire about her parents. She experiences mental gloom and full loneliness throughout her life. There is a quiet that makes her wonder whether they are alive or not. Karobi's mother's book contains the little proof she has regarding her parents. Her grandfather Bimal Roy's death during her engagement with Rajat totally shattered her life. She tells Rajat, "I'm so confused. All the things I was so proud of, my family, my heritage- they're only half- true. The other half of me- I don't know anything about it. Except that all this time my father was alive, and in America" (66).

Sarojini, who is scared of her husband's death, reveals the truth about Karobi's parents, stating her mother Anu died and her father is an Afro-American named Rob, who is still alive in America. Karobi made a firm choice to leave her marriage and Rajat behind and travel to America in quest of her father. Her excitement and passion to learn more about her father drives her quest. Many critics applaud Karobi for making the decision at such a young age. Rajat initially does not want her to go alone. Rajat is eager to help her in her hunt after learning about her strong and determined will power. Mrs. Bose advises holding the wedding as soon as possible, but Karobi wants to seek for her father first. She denies, despite the fact that she knows Rajat is a wonderful person and that marrying him will provide her with a lovely, blissful existence. She has a feminist mind, which is why she chose to look for her father first. Feminism opposes the patriarchal framework and the long-accepted stereotypes and gender norms imposed on women. It advocates for women's equal treatment and opportunity. The term feminist, according to dictionary refers to "a person whose beliefs and behaviour are based on feminism." Karobi is portrayed by Divakaruni as a powerful woman who is not afraid to confront any problems in her life. In her work "*Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*," famous postcolonial feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty discusses the western hegemonic feminist perspective. She criticises Western feminists' depiction of Third World women. She criticises "Eurocentric Feminism," which homogenises and systematises the experiences of many groups of Third World women by removing all marginal and resistant ways of experience. Divakaruni has portrayed Karobi as a feminist who wants to follow what her heart says and wants to take decisions on her own without worrying about the consequences that she will face. Karobi is a Bengali name that means Oleander. Patriarchal hegemony prevents women from speaking, but feminism completely opposes women's subordination to men, especially in the society and family. It attempts to equalise patriarchal dominance. Although it is quite lovely to the touch and see, it has very tough and powerful qualities. Karobi is depicted by Divakaruni in this scene as a combination of beauty and roughness as well as resolve. The novel's title, *Oleander Girl*, has a deep significance and recurs frequently in the narrative. Even the young girl Karobi is given the Bengali name of the oleander flower.

Karobi is portrayed by T Divakaruni as an independent lady who makes decisions based on the demands of her life in America. She has a strong, changed personality and feels that she does not need anyone's permission to cut and sell her hair. She also has the bravery and confidence to do so. Once more, Karobi's feminine sensitivity is evident. She shows that she can live independently. Mohanty is against the misrepresentation of women who live outside of the West. She maintains that the most beneficial feminist study must steer clear of flimsy generalisations about Third World Women and use the actual lived experiences of particular women as a foundation for its theorising. The culture of the host country threatens the identity of immigrants in any society. The location, displacement, and relocation of the immigrants are felt. Acculturation is a gradual, one-sided process that also leaves people with a sense of loss. It is also not a straightforward change; it results in hybridity, which marks several acculturation stages. Karobi, who is an immigrant, has a number of issues and difficulties, which Divakaruni skillfully depicts in this novel. She instantly resisted Mr. Desai, the detective who tried to attack her. Mr. Desai, a native man, lacks the mental capacity to embrace immigrants. She deftly controls the situation when he tries to attack Karobi. She gains the survival skills necessary to handle any serious issue in America as a result of this encounter. Divakaruni describes the struggles

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In India, she is never allowed to go with a stranger. But because of her acculturation, she doesn't hesitate to go or do anything with anyone in America. Seema is inspired by everything Karobi does, so she decides to cut her hair short and sell it along with some jewels to collect money to return to India for the delivery. She has no desire to remain with Mitra because he doesn't care for his wife. Seema leaves her marriage because she doesn't want to endure her husband's patriarchal rule in silence. Seema is inspired by Karobi's challenging personality to adopt her as an example in her own life and change her focus from being a loving wife to a devoted mother. Finally, she enjoys spending time with her mother so that she may feel secure and at ease during childbirth and the baby can receive excellent care. Karobi suffers severe harm from anybody who comes her way as she is looking for her father. These terrible barbarous acts have utterly torn her to bits. Vic, though, compliments her on how well she handled the situation. Vic admires and offers Karobi a job. She becomes independent due to the job he offers. Vic's marriage proposal, though, tempts her. The proposal and Karobi's financial independence give her the freedom to consider her identity. She is completely torn between choosing to live in India with Rajat or in America with Vic at this point. From Meera Anand, a friend of her mother Anu, she learns about her father. After a protracted fight, she finally encounters her father, and she is overjoyed with her new identity. When Karobi meets her father Rob, he is initially unwilling to accept her but eventually becomes interested in their way of life. Despite the fact that her father Rob and mother Anu are not wed, her father doesn't intend to defraud her mother, and Karobi was born as a result of their physical closeness. a sense of disappointment Karobi wonders if she is a genuine child or an illegitimate child. Her happiness is utterly destroyed by this. She claims "some kinds of success are worse than failure. It would have been better not to have found my father than to live with this profound shame. I'm furious with everyone-my mother, my father, my grandfather"(246). Karobi, who is frustrated, travels to India under a new identity and assumes the identity of an unwanted child by the Bose family. She has no emotion towards that. She decides to carry on with her education as a result. Sarojini, Karobi's grandma, is happy to see Karobi as a strong woman. Rob, Karobi's father, frequently call her and invite her to visit the United States. But she decides to be in her home country with Sarojini. She says, "I feel a twinge, I can't deny that America's siren song had pulled at me. But I came back, of my own choice. Surely that counts for some-thing. I love my mother. But I am not her. My journey has taught me that"(280).

Conclusion:

From a feminist perspective, the protagonist Karobi, who travelled to America as a young girl in search of her father, is the focus of the narrative. She was incredibly excited and persistent in her hunt for her father. Because of her background and culture in America, she was able to overlook all of her physical assaults and temptations in favour of concentrating on a single vision that eventually led her to her father. a powerful woman. Chitra Banerjee Divakarni portrays Karobi, Anu, Sarojini, Seema, and Ms. Bose as all being extremely strong women. Both Indian and American cultures have an impact on it. Karobi has a feeling of her family's identity thanks to her Indian origin. After learning about America, she becomes more self-assured and prepared to take on difficulties.

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