



Subjugation of Woman through the Institution of Marriage in the Novel “The Mistress of Spices”: A Societal Decision

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Abstract

The institution of marriage is an important central part of the society. Marriage, supposed to be the holy union of two souls and bodies is the foundation of family. Marriage can change the life of a woman in all aspects. The woman may undergo many drastic changes after her marriage, if the family didn't support her. This paper discuss about the difficulties faced by the female characters because of marriage decisions in the select novel, “The Mistress of Spices” by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. They face many struggles to overcome the situation in the marriage life. Women struggling for liberation also fight for a stronger conceptual framework and a better knowledge of the movement's, histories, and investigative research concerns. Tilo and her spices assist every character in the narrative that is trapped during immigration. In her works, Divakaruni presents women as a class in the same manner as Marxian epistolary does. While other writers merely write about numerous themes, Divakaruni takes the time to address the delicate problems. She hopes that readers would view the female characters from a feminist standpoint after reading her work. Tilo's experience is more of a delicate study of the defining issue of feminism.

Keywords: Transformation, Indian culture, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, marriage, patriarchy, oppression, changes, feminism.


Introduction:

An essential pillar of society is the institution of marriage. The cornerstone of a family is marriage, which is meant to be the holy union of two souls and bodies. Marriage is a cultural practice sanctioning a more or less permanent connection between partners and conferring legitimacy on their kids, according to sociologists: “No doubt marriage can afford certain material and sexual conveniences: it frees the individual from loneliness, it establishes him securely in space and time by giving him a home and children; it is a definitive fulfilment of his existence” (De Beauvoir 421).

The Mistress of Spices, Chitra Banerjee's debut book, was published in 1997 and stands out for successfully fusing poetry and prose while incorporating magic realist elements. Tilo (short for Tilottama), the protagonist, is known as the "mistress of spices." Fantasy and magic ruled her previous life. Tilo's current existence is connected to her work as a mistress in a spice shop at the awkward intersection of Esperanza where Oakland buses stop. The business has a sacred and secret area inside of it. She used to inquire about the issues with the clients when she happened to see them. This paper analyses the main characters Lalita, Hameeda and Geeta for their struggle which are interwoven with the concept feminism, family and marriage.

Tilo, who owns a spice shop with a variety of spices, has the supernatural ability to help her customers with any issue. She uses that to treat and resolve the issues affecting some ladies whose lives are in turmoil. In addition to providing the materials for curries and kormas, she also aids her clients in obtaining a more valuable good: whatever it is that they most want. She offers free guidance to the neighborhood's Indian expatriate population. Each customer at the store receives a different spice.

She witnesses glimpses of unbalanced people including an abused wife, a gullible cab driver, and a morose person holding on to dignity. She assists Lalita, an Indian immigrant who is unhappy in her marriage. Like many married Indian women in America, she has a similar existence. Each customer at the store receives a different spice. She witnesses glimpses of unbalanced people including an abused wife, a gullible cab driver, and a morose person holding on to dignity. She assists Lalita, an Indian immigrant who is unhappy in her marriage. Many married Indian women in America live similar lives to hers.



The established patterns of attitudes, actions, and connections that govern social life are known as social institutions. Social institutions exist to provide for society's basic requirements, such as structure, direction, and order. Social institutions include things like the family, religion, education, and the government. In Indian culture, marriage is a significant institution through which others can control a woman's life. The established patterns of attitudes, actions, and connections that govern social life are known as social institutions. Societal necessities like structure, direction, and order are met through social institutions. As an illustration, the family is a social institution that is essential to a child's socialization. Children learn social conventions, values, and expectations regarding gender and race in the home. The family has the authority and duty to direct their children's life in the proper direction. But occasionally, things get worse although the parents' choice was the wrong one. Without her interest in the institution of marriage, it has a significant impact on a girl's life. In the book The Mistress of Spices, it is what occurs in the lives of the female characters.

Social structures, however, have an impact on how we view ourselves and others and have the power to either support or oppose inequality. To advance inclusivity and social justice, it is crucial to comprehend how social institutions develop these norms and ideals. Man and woman are admitted to family life through the institution of marriage. It is a steady relationship in which a man and a woman are able to coexist in society without suffering any social repercussions. Marriage has an impact on the entire society as well as future generations, not just the married pair.

Every society in the world depends on the family. In times of difficulty and disappointment, family members assist one another. A person can live happily even in a foreign country if his family is there. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Lalita yearns for a child and makes an effort to have a close relationship with her husband. She goes to her spice shop and asks Tilo for assistance because, as an immigrant lady, she has no one with whom to communicate her feelings.

With each further pounding, Lalita's sad situation gets worse. Her husband humiliates her and sexually assaults her: "I need to get home. He must have called one dozen times. When he comes home tonight—" (104). Ahuja can only be patient for a few days when Lalita declines their request for a physical union. He starts acting violently after she rejects him three times. Her attempts to claw and bite are met with a headslap: "Not hard, but the shock of it makes her go limp so he can do what he wants" (101). He doesn't even appear to care about her. It becomes customary to insult and physically abuse her on a regular basis: "fear rises from her, shimmering, like heat from a cracked summer pavement. Fear and hate and disappointment" (104).

She suffered constant pain as a result of her husband's sexual abuse. Even that we are human beings and not animals, women have the right to express their feelings and emotions. Lalita occasionally behaved in that manner. Her act of refusal, however, was intolerable to her spouse. In the depressed state of mind, she consults Tilo regarding her problem and understands that, "No man, husband or not, has the right to beat you [me], to force you [me] . . . I tell myself, I deserve dignity, I deserve happiness" (105-272)

Any interpersonal relationship's success is based on how strong and independent each partner is. Chitra Banerjee has captured the inner conflict that a woman has as she struggles to balance her own wisdom with what is being forced upon her by her environment. Lalita comes to the realization that their own homes and families are their true havens. She says that: "Why not I go see the doctor and see what is wrong, why I am not becoming a mother" (269). Despite the fact that the family is the primary matrix and the center of a woman's existence, many of the women in Chitra Banerjee appear to be able to accept it. She demonstrates her talent for capturing subtly the suffering of women who are constrained by unfavourable relationships and strict social norms. It has always been clear in her works how sensitively, forcefully, and often with exquisitely heart breaking imagery she is able to depict the sufferings and frustrations of women.

Another outstanding character portrayed by Divakaruni in this book is Geeta. She is portrayed as a young immigrant from India who is a part of American metropolitan life and wants to wed Juan, a Mexican citizen. Geeta's connection with her family is an example of the traditional Indian family dynamic, which is mostly governed by customs rather than by love and harmony. Geeta, who was raised in a modern nation and with modern ideas, adopts the decisions and dressing patterns of firingi women as recounted by her grandfather. She lives in urban America and does everything that Indian society forbids women from doing.

In this case, she aspires to marry the man she loves like a modern lady. Although she sees herself as ideal, her traditional grandfather sees her as departing from their culture and traditions. So they make an effort to prevent her from wedding the man she loves. As her own people try to impose patriarchal customs on her, she splits apart from them. Tilo recognizes in Geeta's situation her own anguish and pain from loving Raven. Tilo sets

attempts to calm Geeta's troubled love and begs her grandfather to be understanding of her wish to marry the person she loves, knowing that her own passion for Raven is impossible. Geeta said, "I'm sorry grandpa, but an arranged marriage isn't for me. I'll choose my own husband. And actually, I have already found someone that I love."(30)

Geeta's life ends up being an accurate representation of the lives of the majority of Indian women, who must decide between love and family. Every Indian woman who is faced with a comparable problem is in a similar situation to hers in terms of suffering and pain from having to make a decision. The persistent notion that women's freedom of choice is still taboo in Indian society is demonstrated by Geeta's narrative. These examples show how women should be penalised for being independent in their decisions and being subjugated by her own family members through some emotional attack.

Hameeda also experiences similar suffering at the hands of her husband while conversely starting again in life with his brother serves as a stark reminder of the paradoxes that are a part of women's lives in this novel. Hameeda is a kind and giving person. She lived in India with her family. Her spouse requested a divorce because she didn't give birth to a boy child. She made the trip to America from her home. She was affected emotionally. She got to know Haroun, the neighbor next door. At this time, she thinks about beginning a new life. She thinks a lot about Haroun. In an effort to support herself and her daughter in America, she even makes an effort to learn English. So she was given the opportunity here as well to prepare herself for similar circumstances in the future. Hameeda decided to take English classes in order to adjust to her new surroundings. Contradictions are not limited to the social or physical realms. Connecting Lalita and Hameeda here to show the patriarchal suppression faced by both in different aspects. Marriage should be confirmed between the understanding to fulfil their life journey.

CONCLUSION

To overcome such hurdles in the life of a woman, she needs to develop her physically and economically fit in each circumstances. To become economically fit, she should educate herself. The only solution to become free from hurdles is through education. This paper concludes that a girl should educate herself and others to survive in the world. While educating herself, she gets the sufficient confidence to compete with others and to develop her economic status. Marriage is the institution which gets failure in such cases, when it becomes the decision of the society rather than a decision of a woman. The family should give space to the girl to take decision about her own life. Woman should be treated with respect by the family members then only she gets the same from the society.

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