



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels: Tools for Teaching Multicultural Literature

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Abstract— *The primary objective of this research paper is to discuss the way in which literary works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni can be used as an efficient educational tool when teaching multicultural literature. Her novels and short stories with immigrant themes support cultural and gender-related motifs that allow critical student discussion and help the learners obtain multicultural comprehension. The paper evaluates Divakaruni's literary methods through evaluation of narrative voice and characterization together with thematic analysis of multicultural content. A qualitative research design coupled textual investigation of selected Divakaruni's works together with a review of multicultural literature scholarship formed the research methodology. Research outcomes demonstrate how Divakaruni's writings create important chances to teach empathy skills while stimulating logical analysis so learners better grasp modern multicultural life. This paper ends with the author discussing study boundaries while presenting recommended research paths for upcoming investigations.*

Keywords— *Multicultural literature, Pedagogy, immigration, Cultural identity, South Asian Diaspora, gender Roles, teaching Tools.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions need to recognize the vital role of cultural awareness and appreciation development in their settings because of modern globalization. Through multicultural literature, the education process reaches vital importance because it enables learners to encounter multiple perspectives together with personal experiences along with cultural values. Making the stretch forward is a challenge at any rate when teachers seek multicultural literature to be used in the classrooms. The writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni offer students powerful, approachable methods to study multicultural subjects in the classroom.

The award-winning Indian-American author Divakaruni has earned esteem for her moving depictions of the South Asian immigrant community as she explores how women deal with immigration challenges along with cultural transitions and personal self-discovery. Her writing consists of powerful stories that combine believable characters with their attention to social topics. Thanks to their merits,

learners find suitable materials to understand multicultural matters while developing critical thought. The study aims at comprehending how the writing of Divakaruni could be made useful educational tools in the schooling of multicultural literature. Reading selected texts thoroughly allows identification of literary components that effectively create cultural understanding and sympathetic learning experiences. This paper examines Divakaruni's writing to deliver valuable suggestions to educators about implementing the author's works within multicultural literature curriculums.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary educational practices require multicultural literature as their core educational material since it enables learners to grasp different cultures and life perspectives. Multiple academic sources stress why teachers should bring multicultural texts into their classroom teaching materials. Bishop (1990) supports education methods that should furnish learners with "mirrors" which represent themselves

as well as “windows” which display the lives of different people. According to Bishop (1982) the educational value of the school curriculum improves when books containing diverse student populations are included to affirm student identity.

Educational studies about utilizing South Asian diaspora literature have increased, although specific research remains sparse. According to Nair (2002) educators who want to teach postcolonial literature need to have knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of these texts while teaching. In his analysis Banerjee (2000) establishes how diasporic writing by South Asians studies identity alongside displacement while offering important knowledge about immigrant struggles.

Research on Divakaruni's works mostly explores individual thematic components, although scholars study her representation of female characters (Jain, 2005) together with cultural fusion thematic elements (Kumar, 2010). The teaching sides of her literature works should be investigated to understand how her works can be used to teach multicultural literature at some secondary studies. This paper establishes a gap solution by examining the educational value of Chitra Divakaruni's literary works when applied to critical multicultural themes discussion among learners.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative textual analysis of selected writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The chosen texts include:

Arranged Marriage (1995) consists of various short stories which portray Indian immigrants navigating through their marriage adjustment in American culture.

Sister of My Heart (1999) shows the undeniable relationship between two cousins who grow up in Calcutta and later face challenges during life in America.

The Palace of Illusions (2008) presents Divakaruni's version of the Indian Mahabharata epic with a focus on Draupadi.

The review focused on uncovering vital topics as well as literary styles and methods of structure that improve multicultural representation in these writings. Character development, narrative voice or thematic resonance were specific details considered. This study involved a textual analysis as well as the review of the scholarship regarding the multicultural literature and South Asian diasporic literature and the Divakaruni. The review provided a methodological criticism of text analysis research in order to have the research map their findings within the body of works of multicultural education.

IV. DISCUSSION

Through her literary works, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni creates a rich instructional platform learners can use to deeply study immigration and gender and their effects on personal identity as well as cultural combination. Her literary works use Indian cultural origins to explore diaspora through stories that establish effective platforms to develop classroom empathy and contentious thought processes and multicultural awareness. Reading Divakaruni's collection of works enables learners and researchers to meet characters who deal with the challenges between tradition and modernity as they seek their belonging and fight societal restrictions. This part explores Divakaruni's literary works as a means to create valuable multicultural dialogues that discuss immigration dynamics and cultural roots alongside gender norms, social requirements, empathy building and analytical thinking.

4.1 Portrayal of Immigration and Cultural Identity

Throughout her works, Divakaruni paints the immigrant experience by showing the dual life struggles and victories of people who exist between two cultural realms. Through her short story collection **Arranged Marriage**, she depicts Indian women who immigrate to America while showing how each woman handles cultural readjustment differently. The immigrants in **Arranged Marriage** endure the solitude of complete detachment from their homeland and struggle to reconcile between safeguarding their customs and adopting American conventions. In **Clothes**, a young bride who also has to learn how to learn and be an independent woman is in a state of struggle internally in order to cope with her in-laws traditional wants and needs which is also similar to the experiences of many immigrant learners.

In **The Mistress of Spices**, the author develops Tilo's immigrant story through the magical realism storytelling style depicting her journey while operating a spice shop in Oakland, California. The author shows cultural identity to be revealed instead of fixed because Tilo's space of customer relations and encounters is formed as a symbolisation of many communities of the South Asian diaspora; reflections showed how identity may be formed and transformed under the influence of memory mechanisms and adaptation rejections. These literary narratives help to explore immigration psychology as they evaluate fictional immigrant odysseys in relationship with factual accounts of diasporic stories. These discussions enable learners to study their heritage culture and improve their understanding of other immigrant communities.

4.2 Exploration of Gender Roles and Societal Expectations

Throughout her writing, Divakaruni studies the functions of gender roles among people from South Asian backgrounds

and immigrant communities. The lives of Anju and Sudha narrate how their tight bond crumbles from familial pressures and patriarchal limitations during their mutual journey of adulthood in **Sister of My Heart**. The story evaluates the problems of arranged marriages as well as household oppression while demonstrating the restrictions faced by traditional women, making it ideal for feminist examination. The pupils will be invited to explore how Anju and Sudha deal with the expectations of the society, thereby raising the debate of individualism and sisterhood alongside cultural norms of conditioning.

The Palace of Illusions fulfils the role of a gender study that presents the Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective. Such a version of this ancient text actively showcases Draupadi's emotions along with her rebelliousness in opposition to conventional canonical texts with male authority. Staff members in teaching positions should plan classroom dialogues that examine Divakaruni's feminist reinterpretation against traditional texts to enable learners to investigate gendered cultural perspectives. By analysing the extent of powers that Draupadi has, learners will realise the value of having authority as well as utterances of self and establish connections to current feminism movements.

4.3 Fostering Empathy and Understanding

Divakaruni's works enhance learning contexts by creating an excellent way of developing empathy in the audience. It is clear that she develops the characters that make learners think of them in a personal way because they are clearly presented as the representatives of personal ambitions and vulnerable human nature no matter what their cultural affiliation is. Queen of Dreams follows Rakhi as she tries to unite her American world with the mystical Indian heritage that her mother represents. The story of Rakhi enables all learners to see themselves through universal themes about identity development and intergenerational gaps and their need to belong.

Empathy develops due to the showing of the circumstances of marginalised people in society. The novel **Before We Visit the Goddess** introduces women of different age categories who overcome the borders of love and loss and migration in their own circumstances peculiar to the characters. By walking into these worlds of characters, learners can get a deep sense of how challenging and interwoven problems can be to women of colour, to women who are immigrants and to those who continue to hold multiple cultural backgrounds. The kind of activities through which education personnel can start polite interactions in the classroom can be the character-oriented training or personal recognition schemes set up along with the simple discussions on the life experience of the immigrants.

4.4 Promoting Critical Thinking

Divakaruni's narratives provide perfect opportunities for critical assessment, which leads learners to examine cultural beliefs alongside social institutions. Through her writings, she introduces readers to complex dilemmas that cannot be easily understood or interpreted. In *Sakhi of Arranged Marriage*, a woman stays in a dangerous marriage to protect her kids while challenging conventional Western empowerment principles. Therefore, it will be possible to discuss with the learners cultural agency as well as resilient relationships after they explore this content because it illustrates that the paths of liberation may be difficult to follow.

Additionally, there is one more skill that the learners would need to acquire because Divakaruni uses a non-linear broken narrative through different perspectives (e.g., *One Amazing Thing*) and it needs to be analysed. Cultural classroom facilitators can design classroom activities to illustrate the influence of culture alongside historical and psychological elements to identify character choices with the aim of increasing the multidimensional-identity knowledge of learners. A comparison of the immigrant literature of Divakaruni with that of Lahiri and Tan allows learners to enhance their ability to identify multicultural literary features.

In short, the literary works of Divakaruni provide exceptional multicultural teaching resources that engage learners on academic intellectual levels while also reaching their emotional engagement and their moral understanding. By telling narratives about immigration and gender, Divakaruni makes readers/learners understand two aspects of South Asian and diasporic communities and develop a skill to apply critical empathy and analytical accuracy. The literary compositions provide fundamental resources for classrooms to establish discussion-based rooms for examining different viewpoints while challenging traditional societal standards, which remain important in present-day global connections. Future scholarly investigations need to evaluate how Chitra Divakaruni's literary works affect interdisciplinary learning content with digital pedagogies to increase their educational effectiveness.

V. FINDINGS

As a result of a comprehensive study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's select works and the assessment of their applicability to pedagogical practice, the following significant conclusions are drawn. These findings record how well her books managed the act of teaching the multicultural literature to the learners, the critical thinkers and the empathy (Plag). The works and their analysis, as

well as their use in the classroom, have resulted in several findings that should be of great importance. These findings demonstrate the extent to which her works can be employed to offer courses of multicultural literature that combine the analytical approach and the development of student empathy.

5.1 Real Depiction of the South Asian Diaspora

In her literary work Divakaruni offers vibrant narrations, which express intricate life accounts of South Asian diaspora peoples in the US. In **Arranged Marriage** and **The Mistress of Spices**, she illustrates the plight of immigrants and identifies the cultural displacement as well as differences between parents and children regarding culture versus the American way of life. In **The Mistress of Spices**, the author uses magical realism to demonstrate how, in diaspora, people retain their cultural links through food preparation, language, and their traditions despite the cultural practices they take on in the new environment. Learners acquire a realistic perspective of the immigration problems that the displaced people undergo both emotionally and psychologically through such representations. By reading these stories, learners get out of their stereotypical view to acquire intricate knowledge on literature of diasporic people.

5.2 Perversion of the Conventional Gender Roles

The struggle of women to seek freedom against the traditional patriarchal rule becomes one of the major themes in her literary works. In her literature, she shows how the main female characters are rebels against their gender stereotypes by fulfilling the anticipated cultural roles. In **The Palace of Illusions**, the author introduces the view of a narrative that accepts the male-dominated patriarchy theme of the original text and gives a voice to a less popular character, Draupadi, in the act of countering the original text. During **Sister of My Heart**, the author follows two women who are not ready to live with boundaries imposed by their families or something like these cultural traditions so they can be independent. The elements of analysis brought out in the learners through such narratives are the ways in which different perceptions of gender vary depending on different cultures as they give their thoughts on feminist ideas, autonomy and intersectionality. When reading these texts, the learners will realize how to assess gender role changes in the past and nowadays due to the knowledge of what gender biases in society have not been overcome yet.

5.3 Development of Empathy and Cross-Cultural Insight

Chitra Divakaruni explores and illustrates a great pedagogical value since she creates empathy towards her readers. The characters in her works live with all their

fullness and offer only the situations and the problems the members of audiences are inclined to feel no matter what the cultural background is. In the novel **Queen of Dreams**, the main protagonist explores the theme of dual identity by trying to relate the background of being brought up in the United States to the unbelievable practices of her mother. On the basis of group discussions, reflective writings and role play, these activities enable the learners to achieve empathetic learning based on other realities. The activities lead to a better understanding of some differences in different experiences and points of view in life.

5.4 Critical Thinking Skills improvement

In her detailed style of writing, Divakaruni exposes a tough subject that academicians explore in an elaborated critiquing way. In her narratives, she presents mixed ethical circumstances that make learners explore the existing social norms and examine issues under different models. Imagining Our Wayward Daughters: **Before We Visit the Goddess** introduces three female relatives whose life courses are determined by social norms and financial constraints, as well as personal requirements and wishes. The provision of character decision analysis at the works by Arundhati Roy helps the learners to have meaningful discussions on the interacting pair between personal freedom and cultural responsibilities as well as individualistic characters. Children acquire their analytical and interpretive skills with the help of Divakaruni stories delivered in nonlinear forms, particularly in **One Amazing Thing** as well as his use of multiple perspectives. The analogy allows making multicultural literature analysis more precise since the learners need to compare the works by immigrants by Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Khaled Hosseini.

5.5 Inclusion and Diversity Learner Accessibility and Engagement

Her novels and short stories establish the emotional bond between the people by telling living stories through human characters which a reader can understand easily rather than the academic texts. **The Conch Bearer** offers adventure episodes to educate the young readers of Indian myths in its plot as **The Mistress of Spices** tries to mix some magic into the story of the life of immigrants in order to attract older learners. Her works can be exploited as educational sources by teachers and they can provide the sources as learning materials appropriate for the learners of different academic levels in high schools and university programs in postcolonial studies. Due to the universalities of her stories, which are credible topics about love and loss and self-discovery, they serve as an optimal device in encouraging children who do not read literature into reading literature and learning and appreciating the literary nature of books.

Therefore, the study defines the educational value added by the literary contributions of Divakaruni to multicultural educational research. Her stories reveal not only the intricacies of diaspora but also gender and identity problems and simultaneously create a classroom environment that can be used to teach empathy and critical thinking abilities along with elements of cultural understanding to learners. In teaching, her works must feature in literary programs since they help the learners understand the perspectives of the world and realise a significant change in learning. The research should examine the long-term impacts on the development of intercultural competence in learners caused by Divakaruni and the pros of using graphic novels and audiobooks as educational accompaniment because of their digital form.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

The present paper does not formulate Divakaruni poems and the published essays and children's literature as well as examines only a few works of fiction of the author. Better results improve with better knowledge as all her works are studied rather than a particular fiction text. The study method relies on text analysis; thus, future researchers ought to use classroom surveys and interviews of educators to find out real-life teaching results when using her literary writings.

In this paper, Divakaruni's works are analysed in the context of how she can be used in teaching multicultural literature in institutions of higher learning. This observation depicts their teaching value as far as the understanding of culture is concerned but fails to capture other critical aspects of her style of writing and her postcolonial interpretation of epics and magical realism. To develop this line of thought, further scholarly efforts ought to analyse such features or compare works by Divakaruni with those of other emigration writers. Her works should be assessed on the basis of further research explorations on the basis of enlarged methodology and ample thematic ingredients so as to identify the full academic sociocultural worth.

VII. CONCLUSION

Literary works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni represent an indispensable educational source that can be applied by the teacher to supplement their multicultural literature programs. Divakaruni employs extensive images of diasporic life as well as feminist myth remakes along with cultural mixture and exchange studies in order to produce learning chances to learners regarding identity and also both social justice and belonging. The effectiveness of the appreciation of her storytelling by learners lies in the fact

that she relays profound messages through characters of strong persuasive emotions and through themes that are more thought-provoking and are presented in general formats of writing, which are applicable across the board to all. By including the literary works authored by Chitra Divakaruni, teachers permit the fundamentalist pupils to develop not only emotional sensitivity but also logic and cultural adaptability competencies. **The Palace of Illusions** and **Arranged Marriage** offer a broader literary training to the learners and also create a classroom culture that helps in enhancing understanding of each other about their respective cultures.

The study analysis defines a foundation framework that indicates that the works of Divakaruni enable teachers to develop their multicultural education. Additional research is required to identify powerful practices in teaching, which can be the most effective in assisting learners to acquire intercultural competence following an interdisciplinary course or digital instructions. The connection to current issues between globalisation and methods of telling digital stories should also be the subject of research concerning her works. Through her writings, Divakaruni gives teachers a powerful teaching aid capable of producing learners who become globally conscious and independent thinkers.

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