



Disruption Of First- And Second-Generation Immigrants In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Mistress Of Spices

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Abstract

In the immigrant literature, the word first generation means the people who have actually immigrated to a host country. On the other hand, the secondgeneration Diaspora usually means the children who are born to the immigrant parents in a host country. The first-generation immigrant caught between two worlds, the native land and the immigrated. The characters, both liberated and trapped by cultural changes, struggle to carve out an identity of their own. Second-generation immigrant lives are fraught with tension and uneasiness while following their parents lives as well as the lives of their friends, their peers, and their fellow compatriots. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the Indian author, focuses on the roles of women, mostly immigrant women, living in India and America. She conveys their struggle at the time of regulating themselves to the new ways of life while confronting the culture and tradition that strongly tie them up. This paper attempts to understand the first and second-generation Indian Diaspora in the views of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Divakaruni's fearless heroine Tilo. learns the secrets of spices and she becomes trained as a mistress of spices, she evokes the magical powers of the spices of her homeland to help her customers. These customers, mostly first or second generation immigrants, are struggling to adapt from their old world ideals to the unfamiliar and often unkind new world. Tilo is devoted to the art of healing for Indian immigrant.

Keywords: *Immigrant, Culture, Tradition, First generation, Second generation, America.*

1. Introduction

Indian Writing in English has been enhanced by the immigrant writers and their literary works. Indo-American writers have not only assimilated but also formed emotional ties with their place of residence. Indian immigrants desire for social and cultural amalgamation, their craving for changing into new identity is also implied. The process of adjustment and transformation of the identities of the immigrants is the key factor of immigration.

The first-generation Indian Americans are always acutely aware of the apparent cultural differences between India and America, as typified by them and their off-springs respectively. In fact, the family becomes the 'battlefield' where such differences crop up. The second-generation immigrant does not give much credence to the Indian values and norms. The U.S.born second generation grows up as

American, and the majority of them remain there to stay. In Divakaruni's perspective, assimilation is considered to be occurred when immigrants gain the ability to speak American accented English, adopt American culture, lifestyle, and values, and think and behave like typical Americans, while abandoning or jettisoning their traditional ethnic cultural practices, beliefs, and values. In the migrated family that modernity clashes with tradition, and traditional values and Indian culture clash with American culture. The process of adjustment and transformation of the identities of the immigrants is the key factor of immigration.

In such a situation, the parents or the first generation try to preserve and observe Indian cultural values within their homes. The condition of Indian parents as culturally displaced immigrants deeply touched by many of the diaspora writers, especially Jhumpa Lahiri, the Indian Diaspora writer, herself an example as a second-generation Diaspora. She was born in London but she explored the Indian-immigrant experience in America. Lahiri's mother desire her children to build up knowing their Bengali tradition, and her family often to move visited relatives in Calcutta. Her short story 'Interpreter of Maladies' addresses sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indian immigrants, with themes such as marital difficulties, the bereavement over a stillborn child, and the disconnection between first and second-generation immigrants.

As well, Divakaruni has faithfully projected Indian culture and tradition in realistic terms in this novel, *The Mistress of Spices*. The first-generation immigrants are always the well-wishers of their children. They tend to know well about the host-land than their home-land. They are satisfied with the host culture and language. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni expresses the first generation immigrants to make an 'imaginary homelands' and continue to live invisibly in the foreign land. As a result of the continuous presence of the past, the present gets disturbed. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has shown for instance Jagjit, a Sikh boy, his thin, frightened wrists who has trouble in school because he knows only Punjabi still. A child who faces life's succumbs and struggles with a new identity forced upon him as a young boy in America. Tilo's pursuit at restoring confidence to the little boy merge with the concerns to conform transforms him into militant young man who has been offered protection by a group of boys. The pain of the little boy at being rejected and the way he fights out to stand up with a rebellion and on the course of it losing his identity marks a journey of transformation. His school becomes a place where his personality gets snubbed. This push and pull, rejection, and laughter leave in his consciousness a scar that never gets erased. The pain of his humiliation gets transformed into a kind of rebellion. He changes his name from Jagjit to Jaggi to Jag (Jaguar). Immigrant children are to understand and pick up American youth culture very quickly. Tilo is amazed whether it is her spice-remedy, Jaggi's parents, or America that have driven him to become a drug trafficker, who is perhaps on his way to becoming an armed gangster. The Punjabi boy has become Jagjit by getting his back on those scouting voices, the spitting mouths, the hands; in the playground that had assaulted him.

Divakaruni depicts the secondgeneration Indian Diaspora or the children of the first generation Diaspora through the existentialist problems that come up in their lives in America because of their parents' displacement owing to their immigration to the United States of America. The parents emigrate from India and possess an altogether divergent view towards life governed primarily by the country they leave behind. Because of such a dilemma in the second generation lives, where they are caught in the conflict between the ideas and values of their parents' old country and the ideals and values of their country of birth or where they are raised, i.e., America.

In general, second-generation immigrants feel confident in their abilities and feel positive towards life. But sometimes they feel guilty about not being able to follow their culture. Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* denotes the concerns of first and second-generation immigrants through her images. Geeta, though the daughter of an Indian family, brought up in the American land strives for independence. But her grandfather who was called to America only to be with his son forever he longs to go back to native land, India. It is expressing movement in this family the author reflects the Indian culture. The character Geeta and her parents Ramu and Sheela, and Grandfather had expressed the difficulties of cultural barriers in America. The first-generation immigrant expects her granddaughter to follow their traditional values but second-generation immigrants try to assimilate the inhabited land.

Geeta's grandfather still walking a military major though it has been twenty years. Though he is in America, he couldn't change his Indian tradition. His shirt was ironed stiff with pointy collars, his steel-grey pants perfect-creased down the front. He always remarks his granddaughter's untraditional behavior in America.

'But your Geeta, such a nice girl she is, so pretty and sweet-speaking too, surely you are mistaken. She is coming so many times... if a young girl should work late-late in the office with other men and come home only after dark and sometimes in their car too? Chee chee, back in Jamshedpur they would have smeared dung on our faces for that...if this is America, we are still Bengalis, no? And girls and boys are still girls and boys, ghee and lighted match, put them together and soon or late there's going to be fire. (TMOS 85)

Geeta's grandfather comes in with a newly indignant tale. One Sunday Geeta cut her hair short-short so that even her neck is showing. He said to her, "Geeta what did you do, your hair is the essence of your womanhood." Responding to the remark, "She is laughing and pushing all those messy ends back from her face, saying, Oh Grandpa I needed a new look." (TMOS 86) Geeta appreciates make-up all the time but to Grandpa it is unappreciable, hence he started explaining the tradition of Indian girls, to him only the English women and prostitutes are doing that. 'Good Indian girls are not ashamed of the face god is giving them. You cannot think what all she is taking with her even to work.' (TMOS 86).

Grandfather reminds Ramu, her father, about his duty as a father. He warns him that this is no way to bring up children, girls especially, saying yes-yes every time they want something. He states, "Remember in India 'How all your brothers and sisters got one-two good beatings and after I never had troubles with you. Did I love you less, no, but I knew what was my father duty?' (TMOS 87)." In Indian families the father figures always carry the responsibility of entire family, especially in deciding marriage partners to their young ones. His fear comes true when Geeta came with the marriage proposal, that she has chosen herself. Juan Cordero, a project manager, is a Chicano and a very nice man, she explains. She is adamant on her decision and says 'I marry I'll choose my own husband' (TMOS 88). But her family didn't accept her proposal. Her mother is crying and wringing her hands, she never thought Geeta would do this to them, but Ramu is sitting total quiet. This incident makes us to know the conflict to follow the culture as diaspora. According to the first generation diaspora, and the Grandpa from totally Indian tradition, Geeta's decision is indigestive.

First-generation immigrant identity is associated with feelings of settlement and long-term residence in the host country. All the time, migrants change their attainments of their positioning in the home society. Immigrant parents have a difficult situation in training their children through adolescence, since they are developing up in an unfamiliar culture. The assimilation process into a new society depends on individual circumstances. In "Adolescents and Their Parents: A Review of Intergenerational Family Relations for Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Families," Kyunghwa Kwak (2003) also acknowledges that while teenagers do built up in a new culture, the rate of absorption for them is much easier and faster than that of their migrant parents.

Ashoke easily adheres to the cultural surroundings of America. The memories of homeland haunts Ashima, who during her birthing pains turns reminiscent of her family and its members in Calcutta who would have been around her at that hour. In hospital, Ashima was homesick due to the lack of physical and emotional guidance. Ashima recalls the time frame in India and the activities of her family members who would have been engaged at that point of time. She struggles to accept the alien culture, she finds herself: "unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still" (TN 6). But she was horrified by the fact that she cannot raise her child in the land where nobody was her relation and the place which she knows very little, where every thing seems to be indefinite.

2. Conclusion

Divakaruni portrays the anxieties of the first and second-generation Indian immigrant subjects as their lives unfold in America and examines the Indian society. The immigrants retain the best of both the home culture and the adopted one. The diaspora individuals who begin from Asia yet living in a western nation give an exciting example of the new hybrid culture. Divakaruni is a perfect interpreter of generation conflicts of Indian immigrants. In this novel, Divakaruni researches the thoughts of isolation as well as identity, just not only personal but cultural as well. The characters in the story repeatedly run into crises of identity, which is linked to inability to reconcile the American identity with their Indian identity. There is a distinction or strong demarcation between the first-generation diasporic people and the second generation. While there is the desire for assimilation or for the merging of or transculturation among the second-generation existing diasporic people, this is some sort of lacking among the first-generation diasporic people. The first generation is seen to be re-collectively pines for their mythic homeland' with which they are attached so much. So, perhaps it can be said clearly that the first-generation diasporic people may be considered as expatriates and the second generation as immigrants according to different people who keep different perception. The earlier section discussed previously clearly shows the details of the differences existing between these two states and being; expatriation and immigration.

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