Chapter – I

Introduction

A literary text is an evidence of the socio-political history of a particular period in which it was written. History is always written from the victors’ point of view in the historical texts. “The Mutiny personages were either maligned or less portrayed in the respective historical periods they lived and contributed to Indian Freedom struggle as the early British historians documented the Indian history through their biased perception” (167), says G. Baskaran in his unpublished thesis on “Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian Fiction: A Study of Motives and Methods”. As Dan Brown rightly says, “History is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books-books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe. As Napoleon once said, ‘What is history, but a fable agreed upon?’” (276). Though the literary texts would reflect the social reality of the particular period, there are possibilities to analyse the authenticity of the socio-political moments from them. Earlier, to read history the readers had to rely only on the historical texts. However, after the development of cultural materialism they understood that it is possible to recover the historical facts from the literary texts also. Jerome J. McGann precisely utters that, “It is the business of literary criticism to reveal the human histories of the subjects, a task which will – which must – include an acknowledgement of literary criticism’s own historical limits” (qtd. in Brannigan 168). As this study is to emphasis on contemporary politicised history, the focus is narrowing down into twenty and twenty first century’s historical moments which are available in literary texts.
Literature is the best medium, which reflects the real facts of the universe. As it is the mirror, it contributes the readers with the authentic historical elements. Its evolution can be determined on the norms of influence by various writers. Yet, the birth of literature can never be decided accurately. Similarly, it is an extraordinary mission to discover the origin of any language in the history of its development. English language is the only language that has acquired a higher privilege among the other existing languages and is envisaged as the one that has been spoken by a large number of people throughout the world.

Literature and history are the inseparable elements according to the “cultural materialists” and the “new historicists”. Especially cultural materialism is fairly a method of considering contemporary political issues through the mirror of earlier texts. Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton in their text *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama* precisely say that cultural materialism and new historicism give importance to returning to the history in criticism. In literary studies, their theory “Status of history in literary text” has contributed much in the recent times. Literature is not just a medium for expressing the historical facts but the lively part of a particular historical moment as Howard says, “literature is an agent in constructing a culture’s sense of reality” (25)

Fiction has turned into one of the predominant scholarly forms that are most prevalent today. Numerous thriving writers from the East win the prestigious Booker Prize through the oddity learnt from the West. The representation of assortment, multifaceted nature and rising examples of globalized, multicultural reality structures a huge peculiarity of their written work. Indian Writing in English has now gotten to be developed enough. Makarand Paranjape in the *Indian Review of Books* remarks, “It
would be no exaggeration to say that the best English fiction in the world is being written by Indians or those of Indian origin” (21). Indian English novel is exceptionally rich in both substance and style. Then again, it appears that authors in India have created helpless enthusiasm toward the styles of American and European models and their impact from the oriental nations after independence.

Meenakshi Mukherjee is of the view that the Indian writing may be separated into four stages. They are historic, social, political and psychological stages. Recorded books composed by Chatterji portray the eminent past of India, also in grain patriot energy in the individuals. Fictions are discovered to be the most proper medium to rave about the erudite and physical extravagance of the past; also, they remind Indians about their commitments and rights. The thought of national personality rose just from writing in the nineteenth century, and generally, Indian works turned to be the voice of edification. This made ready for India to comprehend the genuine, truthful position when it arrived at the limit of the twentieth century. It was amid this time that Rabindranath Tagore began composing the novel *Gora* (1910), to challenge the colonial principle, colonial criteria and colonial power, furthermore redefined Indian patriotism.

In Indian Writing in English, many novels can be analysed through cultural materialism. Most of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan center on the themes such as freedom struggle, communal problems, untouchables and working classes. They touch the bottom line of the socio-political and socio-economic issues of their period. Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) reveals the true sufferings of the untouchables in India. That was the most significant socio-political issue in the Indian history. And his
novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) reveals the struggling life of the working class people in the Assamese tea-estate.


Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* (1993) inspects the national political issues at the period of post-Independence national election of 1952 - the Zamindari system, the class issue of that period. *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh largely concentrates on the partition of India, communal uprisings of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta, Second World War and Swadeshi movement. R.C.Dutt’s *The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902) traces about the widowhood of the nineteenth century women and supports the widow-remarriage. Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) represents the Muslims life in Delhi.
Most of the issues connected with socio-political situations take place in the writings of contemporary writers. Especially diasporic writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Shashi Tharoor, Rushdie, Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Hari Kunzru focus on diaspora and have expressed the feel of displacement. They not only express their dislocation from India to other country but also a socio-cultural sense of displacement. Even though they are diasporic writers, they show their love towards India through their writings. Their novels constantly trip around India and its socio-cultural history.

The word “Culture” not only indicates the richness of the traditions but also points towards economic background, politics, literature, art, languages, food, social activities, education, religion, beliefs, and history. The materialist reading of culture centres on politicised history of the particular period. “Cultural materialism” is one of the important theories to focus on the history beyond the texts. “Culture” in the sense of cultural materialism does not limit itself to “high culture” but includes all forms of culture like TV and pop music. “Materialism” is at balances with idealism in the context of cultural materialism. Idealists have faith in the supreme capability of thoughts while materialist believe that culture cannot exceed its material trappings. Through it is understandable that cultural materialism is an outlet of Marxism. There is always an inevitability that cultural materialism and new historicism are the same but the former is from Britain critics and the latter is purely American. Both the theories emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Cultural materialists follow the theory “Structure of feelings” coined by Raymond Williams whereas new historicists follow the theory “Power” coined
by Foucault. Other than that, their focus is almost similar on the politicised history of the texts.

Literature is the only medium to reflect the power structure of the particular period, values and customs of the dominant culture, and the issues of the marginalised. As the Marxist critics say that history always originates from the stories borrowed from the victors and ruling parties. But the literary texts are the true feelings of the author as what he/she faced on the “certain period and it reflects the reality of the history”. Walter Benjamin, in the text “Theses on the Philosophy of History” states,

All the rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachments. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.

(Benjamin 1992, 248)
Williams coined “cultural materialism”, in his text on cultural studies *Marxism and Literature* (1979). There he defines culture as a complicated term to describe. In addition, he has divided cultural theory into ten separate parts and they are Base and Superstructure, Determination, Productive Forces, From Reflection to Mediation, Typification and Homology, Hegemony, Traditions, Institutions and Formations, Dominant, Residual, and Emergent, Structures of Feeling and The Sociology of Culture. By ensuing Williams, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield both have elaborated cultural materialism in their text *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1994). They give importance to Williams’ “Structures of feeling” alone.

“Structures of feeling” is nothing but “meanings and values as they lived and felt”. It is that to know the human cultural activity through the textual reading. Through the textual analysis, readers could understand the cultural history of the period in which the text was published. Moreover, they tell how the people lived and felt in the particular historical moment.

In the case of Shakespearean works, in particular the theatre visibly presents the power plays and political corruption within the monarchic system, and spectacularly represents the poisoning of a king, the madness of a king, the murder of monarchs in their beds. (Brannigan, 7)

History, to a cultural materialist, is the thing that has happened and what is occurring nowadays. As it were, cultural materialists not just make criticism of content by contextualizing it with its own particular time period, however with progressive eras including one’s own. Cultural materialism conquers any hindrance in the middle of
Marxism and Post-Modernism. A few things that Cultural Materialist may take a gander at when examining Shakespeare i) Elizabethan Drama amid its own particular time period ii) The distributed history of Shakespeare through the ages iii) That strange motion picture adaptation of Romeo and Juliet with Leonardo D. in it. Raymond Williams added to the standpoint of cultural materialism by utilizing "structures of feeling." These are values that are changing and being framed as we live and respond to the material world around us. They challenge predominant types of philosophy and suggest that values are natural and non-stagnant. Cultural materialism grasps change and issues the diverse viewpoints in light of what we decided to smother or uncover in readings from the past. Shakespeare is one sample of how cultural materialism can change our perspective, and even our qualities, as to past writings.

The four important characteristics in cultural materialism are Historical context, Theoretical method, Political commitment, and Textual analysis. Nevertheless, cultural materialists give much importance for historical context to recover the history from the literary texts. Secondly, it is theoretical method, which signifies the applications of the theories on the texts such as Feminism, Marxism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism and other theories, which have become noticeable since the 1970s. Political commitment signifies the influence of Marxist and Feminist theory in order to break the conservative-Christian agenda, which subjugated the Shakespearean criticism. Cultural materialism has so many features of Marxism. As Marxists say that history of the past always talks about the dominant economic groups, upper class people but does not focus the lower class people, working class, and the minority. Likewise, cultural materialists blame that history does not show the reality and they tend to focus and recover the reality of the
The break-up of consensus in British political life during the 1970s was accompanied by the break-up of traditional assumptions about the values and goals of literary criticism. Initially at its specialised conferences and in committed journals, but increasingly in the main stream of intellectual life, literary texts were related to the new and challenging discourses of Marxism, feminism, structuralism, psycho-analysis, and poststructuralism. It is widely admitted that all this has brought a new rigour and excitement to literary discussions. At the same time it has raised profound questions about the status of literary texts, both as linguistic entities and as ideological forces in our society.

Cultural materialism is greatly obliged to the Welsh critic Williams’ Marxism. Therefore, the critics lean to emphasis on subordinate in the social hierarchy, for instance women, working classes and other marginalized being of the society. On the other hand, new historicists concentrate on the higher part of the social hierarchy for example church, upper classes and the monarchy. There were three important personalities since 1950s who have given much importance to materialist and historical study of the literary texts. They were Richard Hoggart, E.P.Thompson, and Williams. Thompson plays an important role because of his book The Making of the English Working Class, which brought out a materialist formation of class identity to bear on the study of history. Williams and Hoggards were accountable for creating cultural studies in literature. While Williams, Hoggards and Thompson have been the founders of these different study in literature and
history, Stuart Hall, Terry Eagleton, Tony Bennet, Peter Widdowson and Francis Barker were the next generation of materialists (Brannigan, 95).

Last few decades have been reactant for the development of Indian writing in English. That too the growth of Indian women writers has been a bizarre. Indian women writers embrace a vivacious position in Indian writing in English. In India, writers like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Shoba De, Kamala Das, Anita Nair, Namita Gokhale, Gita Hariharan, Arundati Roy, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Manju Kapur, Bharati Mukherjee, Suniti Namjoshi, and Sabrina Salim have contributed so much, yet when spotlights on the female diasporic writers Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Gita Mehta, Kaavya Vishwanathan, Indira Ganesan, Rani Dharker, Bharati Kirchner, Bharati Mukherjee, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Anjana Appachana, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Abha Dawesar, Uma Parameswaran, Bapsi Sidwa have been carved a significant position and packed away such a large number of recompenses.

The writings of the contemporary women writers examine various issues like socio-cultural dimensions of patriarchy, multiculturalism, economic ramification, globalisation, sexual diversity, gender roles, human relationships, magic realism, clash between tradition and modernity, expatriation, immigration and diasporic sensibility, independent struggle, partition, female quest for identity, eco-critical perspectives and socio-psycho-political-historical representations.

Gita Mehta is an Indian writer, born in Delhi, in a family of freedom fighters, and has completed her education in India and at Cambridge University. As a diasporic author, she has committed her work towards Indian society and culture. Her first work is *Karma*
Cola: Marketing the Mystic East distributed in 1979 and this first book is a progression of interconnected papers weaving Mehta's impressions of India's enchantment. Her first novel Raj (1989), is an exhaustive and beautiful verifiable story that takes after the movement of a young person naturally introduced to Indian respectability under the British Raj. The novel is a great mixture of history and fiction. Later on she distributed an alternate novel A River Sutra (1993). It pictures on India's holiest waterway, the Narmada. It is a interconnected stories. She has written an alternate non-fiction Snakes and Ladders in 1997 which is an accumulation of expositions about India since Independence. She characterizes her India through clever, wise and frequently witty eyes with a sprinkling of customized accounts that characterize it more like a set of articles, however an accumulation of lives.

Kamala Markandaya has written eight books between 1954 and 1973 are wonderful for their choice of experience. Nectar in a Sieve (1954) depicts rural India's tranquillity, despondency and oppression. Her A Silence of Desire (1960) reflects the strains, the quality and the deficiencies and desires of middle class individuals of India. The novel is brimming with inclinations and conflict of thoughts between the old and the adolescent. A Handful of Rice (1966) delineates a current urban city with battle of society and it's disheartening through the marriage of a worker Ravi and complex Nalini. Possession (1963) repeats the subject of Eastern otherworldly existence with Western realism; and The Coffer Dams (1969) looks at the affection abhor connections between the Whites and Blacks. Her subjects are depression, destroyed affection also quest for identity.
Bharathi Mukherjee is a diasporic novelist whose distraction is to manage the issues related with the South Asian Women especially India. Like her contemporary women activist authors, she maintains the reason for females, however she contrasts them in light of the fact that her essential concern is to outline the issues of diverse clashes confronted by Indian women migrants. In her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter*, the protagonist Tara Banerjee comes back to India after seven years stay in America. The story is drawn from Mukherjee’s own experience and those of her sisters who had gone to study in America. In her second novel *Wife*, the protagonist Dimple desires to cross the conventional restrictions of a wife in Indian tradition. Most of her novels deal with the immigrant experience, quest for identity and the clash between tradition and modernity.

Nayantara Sahgal's books have the post-independence radical part as their setting. Females in the writings of Sahgal inquirie the legitimacy of the agreed set of qualities and raise voice against the current cultural enigmas and social standards which prevent women from claiming the freedom for them. Her females decline to be a passive, enduring and losing. They are the women who are aware of their passionate needs since they fight for a change of customs that starves them of self-satisfaction. Their idea of independence is not restricted to the domains of social and financial opportunity. It is the flexibility of mental freedom and passionate attitude.

Anjana Appachana, another diasporic woman novelist, ventures the overwhelming topics like- the victimization of the daughters in the contemporary society, the hush of women and the absence of communication between human beings, and so on. An inside and out treatment of these are woven well in Appachana's debut novel,
Listening Now (1998). This is an unpredictable and grasping novel happens its activity in the working class females in Indian urban and their activities between individual desires and social desires.

Uma Parameswaran managed an account vigorously on her oriental heredity furthermore her substantial reliance on myths, goddesses and legends helped her tide over her diasporic vulnerabilities with serenity. Occasions and creative energy are put in an one an excess of circumstances and dream is utilized to advance authenticity. The writer wishes to understand the higher self of society in connection to her, from the viewpoint of a common identity. The individual’s pain and enduring as a minority keeps her in contact with the more extensive meaning of human battle – the inward epitome of being, and here she does not detach in the middle of male and female enduring, her perspective gets to be humanistic.

Bapsi Sidhwa has indicated impressive achievement as well as a great novelist. Like great writers, Sidhwa's works have excited a mixture of responses. Her investments are immeasurable and she can not be effectively classified as simply a comic author or a Parsi writer. Her books are astoundingly not the same as each other in both theme and handling. One can discover assortment of topics in her fiction, for example, the partition crisis, immigrant experience, the Parsi background, social stances of the minority group, the subject of marriage, feminine issues, and forms of relocation. Her treatment of such far reaching topics is an affirmation to her development as a convincing and sensational writer who is both a warm and quick eyewitness of human culture and a sharp teller of stories.
Among all these women as well as the expatriate writers, Divakaruni holds the imperative position. She was brought up in New Alipore in Calcutta, a student of Loretto House and Presidency College, lived in Calcutta until she was 19. She came to the US in 1976, with the curiosity inside her and there were only few Indians. She received her Master’s degree from Wright States University, Dayton, Ohio. She got Ph.D from the University of California, Berkley. As she is an immigrant writer, her writing centres on the problems of immigrants especially the immigrants of United States. She says that,

“... immigration has been central to my own life experience. Immigration is what made me see my culture with new eyes, once I moved halfway across the world from it. It made me want to write so I could start understanding my experiences in America. I continue to write in order to understand.”(Web)

The notion of shifting one’s living place for materialistic and survival reasons catches the attention of global writers and those who experience the issues connected with dislocation fondly remember both the native and the “new land” where they learn slowly the notion of living with the new environment. Divakaruni, the novelist chosen for study, was born in Kolkata, India. Her childhood and the beginning of her adulthood were in India. She was brought up in India as a typical Indian girl by hearing Ramayana and Mahabharata from her grandparents, which were the influences of her writings and she uses the women characters of the epics she adored as a girl. She considers the strongest women characters of the epics for their fictitious narration in her writings. Even her novel The Palace of Illusions figures Draupadi of Mahabharata who narrates the story
of Mahabharata from the feminist point of view, but it is totally a male centred epic. In an
interview with Shaun Farrell, Divakaruni admits that, “I read very widely, very different
people. This helps me grow - as a writer and a human being. I particularly like reading
old Indian literature - our epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharat, for example.”(Web)

Divakaruni has got so many esteemed awards such as PEN Faulkner award and
the National Book Award. She teaches Creative Writing program at the University of
Houston. Her important activities are serving on the Advisory Board of Maitri in the San
Francisco Bay Area and Daya in Houston. Both are the organizations that help South
Asian or South Asian American women who find themselves in abusive or domestic
violence situations. She served on the board of Pratham, an organization that educates
underprivileged children in India, for many years and is currently on their emeritus board.
Since she helps women in various organizations, she writes about different types of
women in her writings. She herself utters that, “Women in particular respond to my work
because I’m writing about them: women in love, in difficulty, women in relationships. I
want people to relate to my characters, to feel their joy and pain, because it will be harder
to [be] prejudiced when they meet them in real life.” (The Border Book Festival)

Divakaruni is a novelist, poet, essayist, short story writer, reviewer, columnist and
activist. She is the author of twelve novels and they are The Mistress of Spices (1997),
Sister of My Heart (1999), Neela: Victory Song (2002), The Vine of Desire (2002), The
Conch Bearer (2003), Queen of Dreams (2004), The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming
(2005), The Palace of Illusions (2008), Shadowland (2009), One Amazing Thing (2010),
and Oleander Girl (2013).
The Mistress of Spices is her debut novel, which had been made into movie and shortlisted for the Orange prize. The novel is about the traditional Indian woman who is an immigrant of the United States. Tilothama is the protagonist of the novel and an ageless woman with the magical ability inside her. In her childhood, she finds her power of magic and works at an apprentice to an old woman who teaches her proper magical skills by using the spices of typical India. Then she becomes the “Mistress of Spices”. There is an unconditional bond between Tilo and the spices that she should be pure to be the “Mistress of Spices”. In any case she misses her purity as the spices would stop helping her. Tilo cannot love or marry anyone else to continue to be the mistress of spices. Unfortunately, she falls in love with a Native American and everything turns out to be wrong in her life. A magic realistic story is tangled with the mythical folklore of India, which made the foreign readers to be aware of the Indian culture, ambience, magic, myth and folklore.

Divakaruni’s Sister of My Heart is about the two sisters who happen to be together in their life and cherish their sisterhood. They are just the cousins not the real sisters yet they love to be called as the twin sisters. They share everything in their life and help each other. They live in a typical Indian middle class family where they follow all the traditional values. Divakaruni creates the female world with the strongest women characters that changes their traditional myth and enters into the modern world.

Neela: Victory Song is the novel that runs around the colonized period of India. Neela is the protagonist with the rebellious attitude. She is against the patriarchal society and wants to be equal to men, as she wants to participate in the freedom struggle like every other man in the society. But even her mother objects as the procedures of the man-
made society made the women’s mind that they should do only the household works. At last, Neela decides everything by her own and saves her father from the grave danger. The novel provides the snapshots of post-colonial India and the Indian culture.

*The Vine of Desire* is the sequel novel of *Sister of My Heart*, which encounters about the cultural conflict in the world of diaspora. It shows how the women from India face the new world and the culture, and the culture shock they face in the diasporic land. It captures the confused state of their mind whether to follow the culture of the modern world or the traditional culture of India and they lose their identity into the melting pot. They find totally a new identity in a new land. In an interview, Divakaruni states thus:

I think being an expatriate is good for writers. Moving away from a home culture often allows a kind of disjunctive perspective that is very important—a slight sense of being the outsider, being out of place. She even quotes Gertrude Stein who said, —What good are the roots if you can’t take them with you?! She never thought of being a writer and that too in America. The foreign land has offered her a number of experiences that she really wouldn’t have had in India. America, in a way, gave her the opportunity to explore herself. (Sundari, 2)

The novel *The Conch Bearer* is the first book of the brotherhood of the conch trilogy. In the novel Anand, a twelve-year-old boy who lives in the slums of Calcutta strongly believes in magic and loves to read fantasy books. Abhaydatta, a master healer and a magician from Himalayas seeks Anand’s help to return the magic conch shell to its equitable place high in the mountains. As Abhaydatta asks, Anand goes on a mission to
Himalayas and finds out the Silver Valley, a school of magic. He comes across so many moral tests by the scholars from the Silver Valley and passes in their test. At last he joins as an apprentice to learn the magic skills. Through the novel, Divakaruni makes the reader aware of the mythical elements of India and Indian culture.

In *Queen of Dreams*, Rakhi, a young girl lives with her divorced mother in expatriate land. Rakhi’s mother is an immigrant from India, but Rakhi does not know anything about India but it is just a faraway dreamland for her. Her mother is a dreamer, interprets her dreams, and even gets into others’ dreams and warns them regarding their problems. Unfortunately, her mother dies and Rakhi comes to know about the dream journal of her mother and translates that from Bengali to English. The process makes her to know the past dark secret of her mother, her mother’s life in India and the United States and also her mother’s love for her father. The story plot resembles even in Divakaruni’s latest novel *Oleander Girl*.

*The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* is the history based children’s novel and a second novel of the brotherhood of the conch trilogy. Here Anand and Nisha go to a different world, thousand decades back to the historical period of India, the empire of Mughals. The mystical problem of that period continues in the present world as well. Therefore, Anand travels to that period through the magical mirror to solve the problem. There he joins with the magical conch shell and solves every problem of that period which solves even the problems of the present world. The novel makes the readers travel into the historical world filled with mysticism and magic, which is the strength of Divakaruni’s narration and language.
The Palace of Illusions is like a plot summary of the epic Mahabharata but in different style. It is a feminist version of Mahabharata, in which the protagonist Draupadi narrates the story to the readers. She has been mad with her father from her childhood about his biased attitude as her father loves only his son. He teaches everything to his son but not gives that much importance to his daughter. So she always dreams of a palace of her own. Her only best friend is Krishna as they both are in the same coloured skin, black. She feels inferior of her colour but Krishna consoles her. She falls secretly in love with Karna, who seems to be a son of a charioteer. Even though she insults him in the Suyamvara and marries the Pandavas. Divakaruni tries to cover most of the stories but still she has to omit some stories from Mahabharata as the novel can be only for three hundred pages. The entire epic narration runs pages as it cannot be covered within the required pages of a novel.

Divakaruni’s Shadowland reflects the contemporary issues of scientific developments and the corruptions. There is a clash between magicians and scientists in the future land, which is the space for the clash between tradition and modernity. Divakaruni has the concern about her motherland and writes the novel having the social issues that corrupts the world. The novel reflects the people of the present time who forget their traditional values completely and follow the modernity. The novelist visualizes the lapse of culture as well as the ethical values among the people. She tries to recover the social and traditional values of India. The feeling of regret echoes throughout the novel.

Divakaruni’s One Amazing Thing looks like a short story collection. The story line is about the immigrants of the United States who are trapped inside the immigrant
office due to the earthquake. Consequently, they happen to share their stories with the amazing things that happened in their life. There are different types of stories and so many reviewers of this book consider that it is an attempt of retelling of *The Canterbury Tales* in a modern way.

*Oleander Girl* is the latest novel of Divakaruni, which resembles her novel *Queen of Dreams*. The readers would feel the pain throughout the novel. Every character of the novel seems like our next door neighbours, so one would feel like he/she is reading his/her own story and very close to one’s heart. The novel is a painful story of a next door girl, who has been named after Oleanders, the poisonous flower. Like Oleanders, her life is filled with poisonous truth, which she could never have imagined about. By facing so many obstacles in her life, the novel ends with the marriage of Rajat and Karobi. Her prince comes to take her away and they live happily ever after.

Divakaruni attracts every reader through her narrative techniques and narrative. Her description of a scene takes the readers into the different world. For instance, in her latest novel *Oleander Girl*, the chapter opens with the lovely description about Karobi and the description itself reveals her love towards Rajat her future husband.

I’m swimming through a long, underwater cavern flecked with blue light, the cavern of love, with Rajat close behind me. We’re in a race, and so far I’m winning because this is my dream. … I smile and feel my mouth filling with cool, silver bubbles. Rajat’s fingers brush the backs of my knees. (Divakaruni: 2013, 1)
When Divakaruni describes the Indian culture, especially food of Culcutta, her passion towards the culture reflects in her narration of the food. Namita Bandarre rightly says that,

Where the book comes alive is in its description of Culcutta and its food; Divakaruni clearly is a mistress of spices as she moves and shakes when she remembers the flavours and smells of her childhood. Even a simple khichuri dish fills the senses with its redolent spices and the wholesome goodness of its basic ingredients. (186)

Divakaruni, despite her geographical displacement, has deep anxiety and interest with the Indian subcontinent. Most of her novels concern with the socio-political issues of India as well as the country she lives in. Her writing from the exile point of view generally focuses on her past relationship with her native land. Her works mostly centralise on Indian politics, history, culture, and diaspora. While discussing about the politics, history, culture and diaspora, there are issues to be discussed mainly such as inequality, class, marginalisation, patriarchy, terrorism, cultural conflicts and feminism.

Social inequality, economic inequality, gender inequality are very common in the present world. Although there are moments against these inequalities, those discriminations continue to be the part of our culture. There are so many Indian writers in English write about inequalities in their works. Even in the nineteenth century, Charlotte Bronte in Jane Eyre said about gender inequality:

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it.
Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, to absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (114)

Debjaní Banerjee analyses South Asian Diaspora through the writings of Divakaruni and Meena Alexander in the article titled “‘Home and Us’: Re-defining Identity in the South Asian Diaspora through the Writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Meena Alexander”. Divakaruni’s short story collection Arranged Marriage, debut novel The Mistress of Spices and Sister of my heart have been deeply analysed through the light of diaspora. In addition, Banerjee says that South Asian communities use women as the bearers of the culture. Restricted by such notions, they just feel as they are the traditional identity and the symbols of the nation in their own country and when they cross their boundaries, they search their identity in the diasporic land. The protagonists of Divakaruni frequently question their own westernization, yet they do not want to get back to their traditional roles. They always break their relationships or husband in order to find
their identity. When the protagonists disappear from the home, their husbands cherish their memories and wait for them to return. But when it comes to reality women do not have the rights to leave their home. But the women in the fictions of Divakaruni can be as the model for the real women. Moreover, the article discusses how the racism takes place in the western country, and a child batters for not knowing English in an expatriate land in the select novel. Banerjee writes that Divakaruni’s texts are powerful to show the struggles of women in the diasporic land and cultivates the appraisal of patriarchal organizations that systematises the life of Indian diasporic.

Female bonding in the novel *Sister of My Heart* was intensely discussed in the article titled “*Sister of the Heart: Female Bonding in the Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*” by Urbashi Barat. He argues that female bonding is to escape from patriarchy. Divakaruni admits that the epics, her grandfather told her, are quite strange as the women of the epics were not the same of today. When the friendship between men was described, they were devoted, unselfish and noble, but the female friendship in the epics always broke up when a man enters inside the life of females and the women meant for serving men. Comparing with the contemporary western women writers who write about female bonding, Indian woman’s treatment of sisterhood in fiction still tries to prevent female bonding. Even though the Indian women writers like Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy follow the western feminism, they ignore the sisterhood in their focus or show that the patriarchy does not allow it to exist. They struck in the western feminism of the sixties and seventies but the western women novelists have moved on. But Divakaruni is the only writer to put herself into the theme of sisterhood and clearly follows the western rather than Indian feminism.
Anita Singh in her article entitled “Stairway to the Stars: Women Writers in Contemporary Indian English Fiction” talks about the women writers in contemporary Indian English fiction such as Roy, Manju Kapur, Gita Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kavery Nambisan and Divakaruni. Here Singh discusses Divakaruni’s novel *The Mistress of Spices* under the subtitle “Women and Diaspora”. As an expatriate writer Divakaruni contributes more to diasporic writings in English, the article also describes colonial and postcolonial experiences from the view of feminine sensibility, marginalization and patriarchal constraints in the western society. The empowerment of the protagonist Tilo in an alien land and her ability to be as a healer and the seller of the spices in an expatriate land were briefly analysed in the research paper.

Parama Sarkar in her article titled “‘The old rules aren’t always right’: Redefined Gender Roles in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Narratives” takes diaspora in a positive attitude and analyses gender roles through the narratives of Divakaruni. Through this paper Sarkar wants to get rid of the misinterpretations and attempts to redefine the gender roles in the works of Divakaruni. And how the changes take place in the minds of the traditional women when they face the new culture which gives entirety freedom to them and fights against the traditional old myths. They start finding their new identity in the new world.

Ashalata Kulkarni in her article titled “Gender Realities and Diasporic Dilemmas in the Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” describes briefly about diaspora and the problem of diaspora in beginning of her paper. She has pointed out six important characteristics of diaspora and they are i) History of dispersal ii) Myths and memories of the homeland remembered or kept alive iii) alienation in the host country iv) desire for
eventual return v) on-going support of homeland and, finally vi) a collective identity
defined by the above relationship. Divakaruni’s novels and short story collections have
been looked through the eye of diaspora. The paper focuses how the women use the land
of opportunity to find their identity and find their way to escape from the oppression. It
ends by uttering that these are the problems, which were personally experienced by the
writer and she is the true representative of diasporic Indian English women writing.

R.Lalitha in the article titled “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Rising Star in the
Diasporic Literature” argues about the significance Divakaruni in the field of diasporic
literature. Divakaruni’s approach towards the diaspora is innovative and she projects
various themes such as inter-racial marriages, ethnicity and identity, mobile parents and
women’s alienation. The fictional characters of Divakaruni constantly balance the
treasures of old traditions and the surprising new desires. The protagonists always have
the imperfect life and struggle to find their own identity. She provides feast to the readers
through her Indianess and the significance of native culture in her novels and short
stories. And her novels show the strong bonding between the husband and wife which
cannot be broken easily. Divakaruni beautifully manages to show the cultural differences
between India and America and she is the “rising star’ in diasporic literature.

In the article titled “From Immigrant ‘Uncertainty’ to Positive ‘Identity’: A
Course Traversed in the Poems of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Sharmili Mazumdar,
Meena Alexander and Purvi Shah”, Aparajita Nanda analyses the poems of the women
writers which include Divakaruni. When the Indian women arrive in the immigrant land,
they have come with mixed feelings. Being bearer of their culture, they try to follow the
patriarchal culture even in the expatriate land. Divakaruni’s poem “The Brides Come to
“Brides of Yuba City” describes the problems and culture shock faced by the new brides when they arrive in Yuba City. But she also creates the third generation women who have grown up in Yuba City, and shed the patriarchal perceptions of living slowly. The women cut their stereotypical roles like wife or mother to achieve a new bliss in their life. The collection of poems *Leaving Yuba City* provides so many first generation mothers and their suffering. Nevertheless, they become cunning to change their daughters’ life to be the happiest one.

Namita Bhandare in “Local, Yet Global” reviewed the novel Divakaruni’s *The Conch Bearer*. She says the book sounds familiar since the story line of the novel is somewhat similar to the *Lord of the Rings* series. However, it comes alive when Divakaruni describes the food of Calcutta and proves that she is the mistress of spices. Her childhood remembrance in India shows in her narration of the flavours and smells of her traditional food. But she finishes that the book does not have the potential to be the great children’s novel.
In an article titled “Colonial Woes in Post-Colonial Writing: Chitra Divakaruni’s Immigrant Narratives”, Husne Jahan argues that the colonization continues through the immigration. Colonizers influenced their culture and language forcefully with artful activities. Neo-colonialism arrives through globalization, which, without the knowledge of colonised people advertises that the colonisers’ culture, politics, language and business enterprises are superior. Her novel *Sister of My Heart* reconstructs the colonial binaries of East versus West as primitive versus civilised. In her writings, Divakaruni shows that the colonised people, still following the same patriarchal traditions, could find the redemption only under the influence of some other “superior” civilization. Both old colonisers and the new imperialists were portrayed as superiors in Divakaruni’s writings.

S. Udaya Kumar in an article titled “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as a Diasporic Writer” says that the age of globalization immigration became one of the important stage in the human evolution. He talks about the growing up of hybrid culture and the emergence of immigrant literature as a part of migration. He analyses these immigrant literature and the diasporic issues with the reference of Divakaruni’s *Sister of my Heart*. He argues that *Sister of my Heart* differs from Divakaruni’s other novels and provides a different view on the native land and its realities that lead the female characters to leave their female principles in an alien land. This is the story of alienation and displacement. It encounters the patriarchal problems faced by young women with the modern feminist thoughts in Bengal between 70s and 80s but later they became assertive for their feminist desire and submissiveness because of their Indian values in a new land.

In a review titled “Houses, Hills and History”, Sampurnaa Chattarji described Neela as tomboyish girl, protagonist of the novel *Neela: Victory Song* by Divakaruni. The
novel opens in the morning with the marriage ceremony of Neela’s sister. She is always revolutionary in her thoughts and she faces so many adventures as well as dangerous events in her life throughout the novel. Since the novel titles as “Victory Song” she tastes the fruit of victory at the end of the novel. Divakaruni uses some of the traditional and cultural ceremonies and the food of Bengal to picture the culture of the native environment.

S.P.Vanjulavalli in her paper titled “Assimilation: A Key Role in the Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” discusses about the migration of an Indian to the U.S.A as a key role in the writings of Divakaruni being an immigrant writer. If the people migrate to an alien land, the significant change occurs in them is assimilation. They adapt the new culture and change themselves in many ways. First notable change is the food habits. In the novel The Vine of Desire, Divakaruni has pictured this change as the characters preparing some food of the new land. Secondly, they need to adapt the clothes of their adopted country, which Divakaruni shows in one of the stories titled as “Clothes” from her short story collection Arranged Marriage and also in the novel Queen of Dreams. At last, they change their total behaviour and adopt the culture of immigrant land. Finally, Vanjulavalli concludes the paper by uttering that if the assimilation is for the healthy purpose, it can be accepted and otherwise it should be reconsidered to avoid the risk.

Cynthia Leenerts, in an article “American Nightmares in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Mistress of Spices and Queen of Dreams”, brings out the social problems like Oakland earthquake and post-9/11 nationalist hysteria, which are reflected in these texts. The protagonists of the both the novels live their life happily beyond the nightmare in the beginning. But American dream is not just a dream but a Nightmare
which would bring the social issues inside their lives and the struggle begins. The whites’
violence against non-Americans and the targeting of racial enterprises by corporate
America were the important issues that are analysed in these novels by Divakaruni.

A.Padmashini begins the paper titled “The Polemics of the World of Woman: A
Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Sister of My Heart*” with a short introduction on
feministic moments. Padmashini has analysed the trials and harms of the women
characters in the novel. She also discussed about the traditional Hindu religious systems
and the patriarchal norms of the society. Women’s ordeals like dowry, female infanticide,
sex selective abortion, sexual harassment, divorce, widowhood and child marriage have
been discussed deeply in this article.

V.P.Rathi in the article titled “Search of Respectable Life in *Sister of My Heart*”
analyses the theme of love, friendship, assimilation, self-analysis and discovery in the
novel. Anju and Sudha, entirely different characters cherish their sisterhood, more than
the sisterhood has deep friendship between them. Sudha falls in love with a hero called
Ashok but the unwanted love leads the parents to think of marriage with some other
groom. Sudha lives in India and Anju flies to America with her husband, which separates
the sisters apart. More than the marriage a dark secret about her father, that Sudha finds,
makes her to alienate from Anju. Sudha leads a miserable life in her husband’s home,
when her mother-in-law says her to abort the girl child she refuses and get divorced. She
moves to America with the help of Anju and learns to live a life with freedom.

Sarah Curtis reviewed the novel *Sister of My Heart*, which cannot be enjoyed
without the interest in Indian myths, respect for Hindu belief of destiny and sympathy for
young women in the tradition. All the men characters are described with incurable flaws except Singhji. It is possible to learn little things about the girls with the imagination of finding their perfect men then on making the dreams come true for their children. Sarah utters that the elder women in the novel are much stronger than the younger ones.

Lara Merlin reviewed the novel *The Mistress of Spices* as the novel of revealing the fault line of American self that lies between the identity and the society. Tilo, the protagonist has the difficulties in controlling her desires to be the mistress of spices. But when she meets with a handsome young man, her control breaks up and the spices turn against her. Tilo is forced to rethink her role as a healer even though she has her own desire. She chooses to help others with her power and the spices accept her love. By doing that, she invokes up a new American identity.

A review by Peter Nazareth on *Sister of My Heart* compares the characters Anju and Sudha with the characters Sula and Nel from *Sula* by Toni Morrison. Anju and Sudha take each other’s characteristics, like Margaret and Dilkeledi in Bessie Head’s *Maru*. He concludes with the note that Divakaruni’s protagonists are bold enough to face whatever the struggle they encounter and they do not need to end up as victims. And Divakaruni has twinned America and India in her novels.

Julia Hoydis, in the article titled “A Palace of Her Own: Feminine Identity in a Great Indian Story” introduces the mythical and famous epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and analyses how Divakaruni has written the novel *The Palace of Illusions* in a point of view of Draupadi. In the opening chapter itself Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as rebellious woman and also a feminist who searches for her identity. She rebels against
the patriarchal society which asks women only to do the household works. This novel conveys the psychological depth of the great epic *Mahabharata*, in a feminine perspective.

Archana Srinath in her paper titled “*The Palace of Illusions – Metaphor for Life*” talks about the significance of the women’s role in everyone’s life. A woman has the potential to create the history. Draupadi is the women who had the power to change the history, the main character from the epic *Mahabharata*. In Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions*, she highlights the character Draupadi and the other women characters of *Mahabharata*. Draupadi narrates her magical birth from the fire, unusual marriage with the five husbands, and the insult she faces by her husbands’ enemies which leads to the war. The novel depicts the various characters women play in her life as a daughter, wife, mother, sister, friend in this novel. It also throws the light on the suffering, challenge and the causes of the women and their domestic life in a patriarchal society.

“Treatment of Women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions*” is a research paper by T.Chandra who deeply argues how the women had been treated in the ancient times. At that period, women were considered as the movable property, slaves and the mute sufferers who cannot raise their voice against the injustice. Draupadi obeys her husband the family, even though she suffers since she was considered as a property. Kauravas have molested her in the public since her husbands have failed in the dice game by keeping her as a bet. So she takes the oath which leads to the war between Pandavas and Kauravas.
Michael W. Cox has reviewed the novel *The Palace of Illusions* by Divakaruni. Divakaruni takes the most enchanting female character to create the story of Mahabharata in a point of view of women. The title refers to the palace, which was built by Pandavas to please Draupadi immediate after their marriage made Draupadi happy as she always imagined about the palace of her own. After it got destroyed, it taught a powerful lesson to Draupadi for her pride. Here pride is the main weakness of Draupadi. When Kauravas tries to humiliate in the public Krishna saves her from the ill-treatment. Even though she was saved, she has cursed Kauravas to die in the battlefield. The novel of Divakaruni is an entertaining and transcendent.

In her article titled “Panchaali as the ‘Sutradhari’ in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions*” L. Kavitha Nair spills out that, the life of Draupadi from the ancient myth almost reflects the modern world. Comparing with the Vysya’s version Draupadi with Divakaruni’s version, the latter one is the most modern and fights against the injustice for women. The novel opens by showing Draupadi as an obsessed young woman of hearing her own life history by her nurse. Whenever she listens her own story, she interprets and criticises that with her new idea. Draupadi can write her own history and destiny according to the Indian myth. So when she takes the actions that not only affect her own life but also others destiny. She was happy about her birth since it was the significant one but at the same time, she felt inferior about her name that is not as good as her brother’s. Her name only gives the identity that she is the daughter of Drupad but her brother’s name provides the meaning about his mission in his life. Being the narrator as well as the agent of action, Draupadi raises her voice for the womanhood.
In an article titled “Gender and Postcoloniality in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Palace of Illusions” Ashalata Kulkarni spots out the theme of gender issues and marginalization of postcolonial theory in the novel The Palace of Illusions by Divakaruni. The social set up of the period of Mahabharata, gender, class, race and marginalization represented through the characters such as Draupadi, Karna and Ekalyva. The novel also traces the psychological development of Draupadi’s life which traces out the stages like her birth from the fire, as an important queen by changing the history, the only queen of the Pandava’s throne, a true wife till the death of her husbands and her genderless identity in the unknown empires of her life after death. When Draupadi feels inferior about her complexion, Krishna explains her solution with the native ideology which retains the cultural identity and freedom from the colonial oppression. The characters from the epic has been analysed through the perception of postcolonialism in this paper.

The paper titled “Rediscovering the Early Years of Divakaruni’s Draupadi” by Ms.PVL Shailaja and N.Ramakrishna focus the early years of Draupadi. They compare Divakaruni’s Draupadi with the Draupadi portrayed in Prathiba Ray’s Yajnaseni (1993) and Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad’s Draupadi (2006). Like Divakaruni’s Draupadi, Ray’s Draupadi was also portrayed in a feminine perspective while Prasad’s Draupadi with the different angles as mental power, bravery, willpower, adaptability and dignity. According to Divakaruni, the portrayals of women characters in myth are unsatisfactory since they touch only the male protagonists to be superior. So she just gives importance to the female characters in her novels, perceiving them with a different view.
The review titled “One Bowl and Some Cream” by Sandhya Rao reviewed the novel *The Mirror Fire and Dreaming* by Divakaruni. He compares the novel with the *Harry Potter* Series. The characters resemble the characters of Harry Potter. The novel is a good imitation or medium original. He ends the article with the question that ‘Where would you go for?’

An article titled “Travelling across Time: A Critical Analysis of *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* and *Shadowland*” by P.V.L.Shailaja and N.Ramakrishna discovers the similarity between Divakaruni’s novels and H.G.Wells’ *The Time Machine* with concept of time travel. The novel *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* is named after the magical mirror, which offers the time travel in the novel. The characters of the novel travel through the time and reach the period of Mughal Empire and solve the problem over there with the help of the conch and the mirror and reach their place. Even in the novel *Shadowland* the character again travels to the future, the land with the corrupted air. There is the conflict between the scientists and the magicians. The problems were solved with the help of the conch and the mirror and finally they arrive at their Silver Valley, and the trilogy ends. The novels have projected the contemporary world which is filled with corruption.

Lata Chaturvedi in the research paper titled “The Enigma of Female Bonding in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Queen of Dreams*” discusses about the conscious and unconscious bonding between mother and daughter relationship. The protagonist Rakhi, after her mother’s death, who was the dream-teller, finds the diary of her mother. While trying to translate from the regional language to English, she finds out the unrevealed dark secret of her mother and her life in India. Like her mother Rakhi also becomes the
dream-teller and she confesses that her mother does not teach her to interpret the dreams but she herself finds of it. Rakhi feels confident about her ability that transformed from her mother, which she thinks as a gift from her mother to live in the immigrant land with positive attitude. Rakhi adapts her new land and enormously escalates chances. It is in this context the enigma of female bonding which ties to tradition/homeland are chosen and tattered.

Nilanjana S.Roy in her review on *Sister of My Heart* says that if *The Mistress of Spices* was the magic overloaded of fantasy, then *Sister of My Heart* sets several other elements of fantasy. The novel occupies the same fictional elements as Tan’s *The Joy Luke Club* and Terry Macmillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*. She argues that the novel is like a modern-day retelling of the fairy-tale princess’s story without the Mills and Boon ending, except where everyone does live happily ever after. However, Divakaruni wins in creating her women character something more than statue. But in making her men character she feels dilemma like it overwhelmed Anjana Appachana’s three- generation saga in *Listening Now*, and slightly blighted Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*. Roy also says that it is not necessary for every author to aim to be like Naipaul, Narayan, Seth or Rushdie. But even within the limitations the book does not offer enough. Roy compares Divakaruni with Zimmer Bradley, who is a novelist succeeded in retelling of Arthurian legends from the point of view of women which includes *The Mists of Avalon* and *The Lady of Avlon*. But Bradley fails in her retelling of the legend of Troy from the point of view of females, which is because none of her characters haunts the mind of the readers once they have closed the book. Likewise Divakaruni succeeds in her first novel *Mistress of Spices*, but she does not make the status in *Sister of My Heart*. 
Anita Roy has reviewed the novel The Mistress of Spices saying that Divakaruni through the book gives more details of spices than the dictionary offers. Divakaruni’s The Mistress of Spices is obsessed with flavours and tastes like Kavery Nambisan’s The Scent of Pepper, Sunetra Gupta’s Moonlight into Marzipan and Laura Esquevel’s Water for Chocolate. She constantly wants to use poetic language to describe food and the magical events eagerly. When Tilo, the protagonist falls in love with a young man she tries to break the laws of the spices. Thus she cannot continue as a mistress of spices and they turn against her. Apart from everything the beautiful thing about this book is the description of the magical qualities of the spices like ginger for courage, fenugreek seeds to make a damaged body shape again, chillies for fire and vengeance. These make the reader’s mind more magical. The reader will get aware of the uses of the spices, their Latin names, their chemical composition, export value, and some history about the spices. The poetry tangling with the prose is worth reading.

In an article titled “Indians in Exile: Self-assertion and (Re-) Creation in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Mistress of Spices” Ludmila Volna brings out the development towards the self-assertion of the characters of Divakaruni. Using the Hindu cosmology and the everyday life concepts of Indian culture, she makes the readers know the myths in detail. She has also analysed the negotiation of their identity, role of the female in Hindu mythology. The diasporic problems that have been faced by the individuals, the dilemma between Indian culture, and the other culture and how the characters adapt their new culture to get a new identity are some of the issues taken by Divakaruni for narration.
In a thesis entitled “Diasporic Experience of Women in Select Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni”, D. Dhanalakshmi analysed Divakaruni’s novels through diasporic experience of women. She has divided the thesis into five chapters. In the introduction she has brought out the general history of Indian Writing in English, contributions of the writers in English, the major themes of Indo-Anglian literature and also focuses on the women writers in Indian Writings in English. She describes about Indian Diaspora in detail and its significance. In the second chapter, she gives the perspectives of life within oriental values and occidental ethos with the reference of Divakaruni’s *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams*. The third chapter analyses about the paradigmatic shift from subordination to empowerment the reference to *Sister of My Heart* and *Vine of Desire*. In chapter four she discusses regarding the diasporic pulse in the novels of Divakaruni. Chapter five concludes the entire chapter and proves how Divakaruni succeeded in presenting a balanced picture of Diaspora.

The thesis entitled “Negotiating with the Past and Contemporary Life of Indian Women: A Study of the Works of Shashi Deshpande and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni”, Harpreet Kaur Sahi has done a comparative study between the novels of Deshpande and Divakaruni. He has divided the thesis into seven chapters. He tries to bring out the similarities and differences of the protagonists of the both writers in different situations. Also focuses on how the writers try to compromise between the pressures of past life and pulls of the present life to show the negotiation of the traditional values to enter into the new life in the immigrant land as well as in India. And he brings out the dilemma of the protagonists in the new identity who enjoys the essence of modernity by following the realm of tradition.
Researchers generally focus the writings of Divakaruni through Diaspora; some of them focus her writings in feminine perspectives. Attempts are done in Divakaruni’s writings by applying the postcolonial theories. This thesis makes a slight difference from previous attempts, in that, for the first time Divakaruni has been evaluated unconventionally as a cultural materialist writer which applies the “cultural materialism” theory to grasp Divakaruni’s sense of the social issues dealt by her in select novels.


The thesis has been divided into five chapters. Chapter One defines the title in brief. It introduces cultural materialist theory in detail and the scope of the theory. In addition, the researcher applies the cultural materialist view on some of the Indian English Writings. It also seeks out to give the broad estimate of contemporary Indo-American, women novelists and the themes they focus in their writings. The literature review on Divakaruni’s writings has been brought out in detail to substantiate the choice of the title for research.

Chapter Two concentrates on the social realities on the texts. Some of the social realities such as feminism, female infanticide, colonization, patriarchy, terrorism, and dowry system have been deeply analysed in the chapter.
Chapter Three discusses the influence of the author’s life in the novels. As she is a Bengali, most of her characters are with the Bengali identity which resembles her ownself and her protagonists go through the plight of immigration as Divakaruni has faced. So, immigration plays a vital role in the novels of Divakaruni. This chapter traces out the history of migration and the importance of diaspora. Divakaruni also gives importance to the Indian culture in her novels since she is an immigrant. As expatriate writing inhabits a major part between cultures and countries, Divakaruni as an expatriate writer brings out the every single fact of the Indian’s cultural activity.

Chapter Four throws light on the marginalized beings in the novels of Divakaruni. It also examines the sub categories of marginalisation like gender, race, sexuality and class. She proves how these values and beliefs influence and determine the lives of the protagonists.

Chapter Five attempts to sum up the entire chapters and proves the cultural materialistic approach on the novels of Divakaruni. As the cultural materialists argue the novels provide the social realities of the particular period in which they were written. Hence, the select novels of Divakaruni bring out the politicized history of the twentieth and twenty first centuries.