Chapter V

Conclusion

Since time immemorial man’s undeterred curiosity to know the unknown and the distant has made him break the barriers of time and space. When some have migrated to distant lands in search of fortune, some have tried hard to get their dreams fulfilled and others have travelled in quest of identity and stability in life. Demographic dislocations cannot be restrained in the modern times due to globalization and technological revolution and thus the enacted human drama lends itself to creative writing.

Diaspora is related to globalization, trans-nationalism and post-colonialism; but it is different from the above mentioned processes, not by the objective features of demographics and geography, but by the subjective conditions of demography and the longing connected to geographical displacement. Diaspora is not simply a collection of people, communities of scattered individuals but a group of people bound by some shared history, race or religion. There are vast numbers of people who exist in one place and yet feel intimately related to people in other places. Hence diasporic writing becomes a phenomenal feature in postcolonial literature.

The modern writer does not write in isolation; he is involved in social reality. The relation between literature and society is reciprocal; both serve as cause and effect to each other. A literary creation does not come into existence by itself; its emergence is determined by social situations. Though the writer’s individual talent should be rooted in the tradition of a particular society and culture, the real strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual’s predicament. Culturally and even linguistically estranged as the individual feels about himself, the whole question of his social, emotional, ethnic or cultural identity assumes mythic
proportions and thus becomes an unattainable ideal. Any great writing is appreciated wherever it is produced, and literary merit has never been dependent on home address.

Among the modern writers, immigrant writers have started creating a niche for themselves, showing their impressive presence by their uncompromising works. These brand of immigrant writers share a common theme and pattern in their fiction. These writers have a common experience of growing up in an immigrant family in an alien country. Immigrants are energetic, resilient, and able to accept changes. They themselves change in the encounter of cultures and they also bring about desirable change in their environment. The assimilation involved in immigration does not mean a denial of the past. It only means giving up a rigid holding on to the past. Now the question is whether such diasporic writers intend to rewrite nationalism to empower indigenous traditions and cultures, depreciated by a colonial past as a voice of the subalterns (the doubly displaced) or is it simply the outburst of challenges of displaced mass regarding identity formation, class-conflict, nationalism and cultural dissemblance. These pragmatic and material considerations influence almost all writing from the ‘centre’ as well as the ‘margins.’ Thus, this is an expression of a postcolonial identity, an identity that recognises the contingencies of the colonial experiences and that does not fail to champion the ‘substance,’ and the configurations of the writer’s ‘inner forms.’

The Indianness of Indian writing is as genuine as the Americanness of the US writing. Critics and readers all over the world agree that the fiction writers of the present scenario, especially from India, are adding a significant contribution to the mainstream of world literature. In the post-colonial India, a tension between tradition and modernity, Indianness and Westernization is witnessed. In fact, these binary
strands are the most productive and conflicting elements of modern Indian writers.

Yet, Indian literature cannot completely be divorced from its age-old tradition. In fact, the authors raised the issues of linguistic, regional, national and cultural identity, as well as of literary style, artistic quality and poetic tradition.

By interpreting various experiences of the diasporas in their various nuances and manifestations, suggesting them new possibilities, new routes, new modes of thinking and existence in the new countries in the fast changing, political, social, economic and cultural global scenario, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni with her collection of short stories and novels has secured a commendable place along with other Indian diasporic writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, V. S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri. The critical acclaim and increasing recognition that Chitra Banerjee has received has established her as a promising writer interested in the immigrant experience. She views the experiences and redefines herself as an alienated expatriate writer.

Chitra Banerjee is a product of forces which are eastern as well as western. She honestly acknowledges the interaction of these two forces, one inner and the other outer, one central and the other peripheral. In the process of such interaction, both the forces gather significance, and both contribute to the formation of an identity which may called postcolonial. It is a cross-cultural scenario where, through her writings, the diversity of Indian writing in English is revealed.

‘Immigration’ is a subject freshly supplied by Chitra Banerjee to the repertoire of modern American fiction. With a cross-cultural backdrop, the novels bring a panoramic view of socio-cultural experiences of characters in India and in America. By representing the experiences of Indian women in America, she has taken into account the need to interpret her communities’ predicament. She portrays the tensions
of Indians who have emigrated from their homeland and who try to integrate themselves into their adopted homeland while adhering to their native culture.

Chitra Banerjee delves deeply and richly into the lives of immigrants. Her novels brilliantly claim out the question of cultural identity, family and redemption. It is satisfying as well as consolatory. By treating themes like motherhood, childlessness, marriage, economic independence and reinvention of the Indian women, she addresses certain fundamental values of Indian society. Straddling between two cultures, she is just one of the many Asian Americans who remain Janus-faced, torn between not a dead world and one powerless to be born, but between two distinct worlds, each very alive in its own way, each asserting its claims on the individual’s sensibility. It remains a three-way relationship, the country of origin-the writer-and the adopted country. The novels also try to address Chitra Banerjee’s sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians or Indian immigrants; with themes such as marital difficulties, miscarriages, and the disconnection between the first and second-generation of the immigrants of America.

Chitra Banerjee through her works has not only presented a female point of view but has also subverted the patriarchal authority over women in India and in America. She emphasizes the fabulistic pattern of heroines who carefully identify the shifts in the development of identity as centered on a well-articulated notion of race, caste and class. All the heroines of her may be taken as projections of her alternate selves in the sense of echoing one aspect or other of her chequered life, precipitous fall from spectacular riches, marriage, shabby treatment received as an expatriate or feeling buoyed up by the bracing freedom of America.

The way Chitra Banerjee has transformed marginal women into new icons of independence in her selected novels like *Arranged Marriage, Sister of My Heart, The*
Mistress of Spices, Queen of Dreams and The Vine of Desire she proves that women are capable of restructuring the community. She suggests two advantages of Women’s Liberation. First she allows them to realize their potential as individuals in the wider society. Second, she insists that it is the only way by which they could achieve personal recognition and identity. Hence she prefers to identify herself as a ‘womanist’ writer and her writings are critiques of the female identity in India and America.

Chitra Banerjee, like many other postmodern writers, has taken up the problems and experiences faced by the Indian immigrants in America. The present study analyses her novels into three distinct chapters: chapter one deals with human relationship in India and in America, chapter two describes the traditional Indian culture as against Western ethos, and chapter three deals with family intrigues through socio-cultural experiences and assimilation thus weaving the main fabric of the plot around female characters. Chitra Banerjee extricates ample opportunities for drawing up a rich comparison between the tradition-bound lifestyle of India and the abstemious, momentous and materialistic scenario of the West. She may be an Asian American, she may be an expatriate Indian, but she is primarily an Indian woman who explores through her fiction the meaning of life in the way that the Indian woman lives it. She admits in her “Unbraiding Tradition: An Interview with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni”: “I’m a woman writer, and I’m an Asian – American writer, and I’m a writer of color, and ultimately I’m just a plain writer” (Aldama 5).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni transmits a particular message to her readers. First and the foremost, she shows the South Asian community to be heterogeneous with its internal divisions, far from the monolithic constructs of American media and in part the Indian community itself would like to portray. Secondly, she uses her stories as a
means to empower women and to encourage them to be their own selves. She shows how personal choice is the birth right of all humans, men and women, Indians or Americans and that tradition can frequently encumber more than inspire. She deals with the complexity of human relationships as one of her major themes, which is a universal issue, as it attracts worldwide readers to her novels.

Chitra Banerjee’s novels are not political or spiritual in character but are engaged in exposing the human mind and in indicating the ways to psychological fulfilment. She tries to expose the problems and issues faced by modern woman in this male-dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. Characters like Mrs. Majumdar in *Sister of My Heart*, the mistress in “The Maid Servant’s Story” and the mother in “The Bats” dare not fight for freedom for they would not know how to survive alone. Lalita in *The Mistress of Spices* reflects the lives of suffocated women in search of a refuge from suffering. Daksha’s husband in *The Mistress of Spices* accepts her as a working woman but fails to recognise her as a human being.

Women sustain life; manage the home and protect the culture too. Sometimes they revolt against the exploitations of men and sometimes compromise with the social reality.

The Indian society is still very conventional in its approach to marriage and despite numerous contradictions husband and wife strive to maintain an outward show of balance and harmony. Mr and Mrs Gupta in *Queen of Dreams*, Mr and Mrs Majumdar in *Sister of My Heart* and Pratima and Bikram in “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs” are examples of this fact. However, each one of them is frustrated and lonely and adopts his or her manner of facing the problems. Thus the assessment of human relationship, particularly the man–woman relationship is in trouble due to alienation, loneliness and lack of communication.
Rakhi and Sonny in *Queen of Dreams* and Tilo and Raven in *The Mistress of Spices* suggest how to live peacefully in America by accepting and understanding each other. The changing scenario of man–woman relationship is portrayed through the nameless protagonist and Rex in “The Word Love.” Chitra Banerjee has in her own characteristic way shown how love heals and ensures a happy home and a happy life. Thus love’s basic needs are in the form of sincerity, honesty and openness while dealing with each other. There could be only deluge and destruction, if these are not fulfilled.

Chitra Banerjee has touched upon different facets of an urban woman’s life and her plight. She describes the lives of characters who struggle against a society to discover freedom. Abha and Meena in “Affair,” the nameless protagonist of “The Disappearance,” Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*, Geeta and Lalita in *The Mistress of Spices* are repeatedly suppressed by male domination. These women, in order to liberate themselves, need to empower themselves to confront institutional structures and cultural practices that have subjected them to patriarchal domination and control.

The selected works lend themselves to a study of individuals who struggle due to the conflicts in relationships or cultural traditions. The protagonists try to establish their individual identities in a new milieu, while experiencing a sense of displacement, alienation, and isolation. Marital conflict arises as two individuals try to adapt to the unfamiliar and new culture. Problems arise in their relationship because of their misunderstanding and the new cultural environment. The individuals are caught up in the confusion of their migrant lives and the need to get connected to family and friends for emotional fulfilment as seen in the cases of Deepak and Preeti in “Doors” and Rakhi and Sonny in *Queen of Dreams*. 
Chitra Banerjee’s characters are sensitive and respond faithfully to the needs of the self which could not have been possible if they are in India. America on the other hand serves as a land of freedom, promise and self-fulfilment where man–woman relationships are based on mutual and equal partnership for a pair like Somesh and Sumita in “Clothes.” It is in the backdrop of the diasporic predicament of the characters that the writer examines the problems of human relationship and interconnectedness between people.

Almost all the couples suffer from loneliness and unrequited love in marriage because of haste or wrong choices. The mother and the father in “The Bats,” Sumita and Somesh in “Clothes,” Pratima and Bikram in “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs,” Rex and the nameless heroine in “The Word Love,” Meera and Richard in “A Perfect Life,” the mistress and her husband in “The Maid Servant’s Story,” the nameless heroine and her husband in “The Disappearance,” Preeti and Deepak in “Doors,” Abha and Ashok, Meena and Srikant in “Affair,” Asha and Mahesh in “Meeting Mrinal,” Sudha and Ramesh, Anju and Sunil, Mr. and Mrs. Majumdar, in Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire, Tilo and Raven, Lalita and Ahuja, Daksha and her husband, Geeta and Juan in The Mistress of Spices, Rakhi and Sonny, Mr. and Mrs. Gupta in Queen of Dreams – all these couples have strained relations with each other. The relation of father and daughter, father and son, mother and son, mother and daughter have also come under the dark shadows of suspicion, distrust, lack of communication, and above all silence.

Chitra Banerjee universalises the need to love and to be loved while living. Life will be meaningless, if it is denied. For the enjoyment of life, feelings like hatred, distrust and ill will would have to end yeilding place to love. A happy life demands
understanding, maturity and sharing on the part of the individuals for the creation of a happy home.

In the contemporary world individualism is predominant in society where the traditional norms are rejected. Chitra Banerjee calls ‘sisterhood’ as women’s friendship, not of sisterly bonding. Personal fears, complexes, fantasies and loneliness can be overcome by the strong hold of sisterly bonding. Abha and Meena in “Affair,” Asha and Mrinalini Ghose in “Meeting Mrinal,” Rakhi and Belle in Queen of Dreams, Anju and Sudha in Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire are examples of such universal sisterhood. They overcome all the critical and difficult circumstances because of their co-ordination, co-operation and mutual understanding.

In a world of eroding values and steady degeneration of familial bonds, the novels of Chitra Banerjee stand out extolling the permanence and strength of such relationships despite cultural fragmentation and calculated attempts at cross-culturization. The study of Chitra Banerjee’s novels reveal that human relationship is passing through a conflict in roles and values and truly present the decaying face of human relationships as evident in this modern world.

Chitra Banerjee’s Arranged Marriage, Sister of My Heart, The Mistress of Spices, Queen of Dreams and The Vine of Desire though seem to deal with Asians, they are ultimately human tales; their specificity comes from their social and cultural contexts, the ethos and social mores they reflect, the ways kinship and social roles function in their hierarchal societies with their predominance of caste, religion and the specific forms their emancipatory aspirations assume. The human heart would have to beat a changed rhythm for a better life. Her appeal to humanity is that this earth would have to get accustomed to the new mode of thinking, new customs and intensely throbbing life, which waits for the new woman to follow with fervour.
Anju and Sudha of *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire* are first caught between the orthodoxy of a Hindu elite family and the modernist feminist thoughts of freedom that set the tone of youth in the 70s and 80s in Bengal. Later they are torn between the American culture and society and the native constraints of Indian women. To be precise they are caught between a feminist desire to be assertive and the Indian need to be submissive.

As in *The Mistress of Spices*, Chitra Banerjee has grappled with women’s experiences through female language and the intuitive aspects of female intelligence. Tilo, forges to be an idealist by exacting the Indian women’s traditions, by looking at Indian subcultures and also unacknowledged realms of experimental realities. The question of women’s freedom is the most crucial issue that she takes up for discussion. The fact is that her women are seen not as victims of oppression, as passive spectators of the drama of history, but as having an influence and a history of their own and provide a platform to study the progression from the feminine to the female.

Chitra Banerjee has a private vision as she constantly makes her characters confront with the task of defining themselves and their role as a woman in a family and outside the family circle. One can identify with her characters a defiant tone of voice in asserting the personal and subjective. It is almost a recurrent tale of people rediscovering their own reality and meaning as the novelist sets them on a journey from unawareness to awareness. The power to do so stems not from an external definition imposed by others but in one’s realization of that innate human power that gives him/her the strength/authority to build the stairway to the stars.

The novelist brings out the subtle nuances of the male characters through Somesh in “Clothes,” the husband of “The Disappearance,” and the master of the
house in “The Maid Servant’s Story.” The husbands want their wives to be modern, smart, chaste, and obedient. There is this hiatus between the man’s expectations that the woman should be ‘modern,’ whatever that means, and his old habit of treating her with the traditional male dominance.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni truthfully portrays the women characters who are seen suffering from a sense of existential problems and passions. Women in her works are hypersensitive, solitary and helpless. They always show their mettle and possess all the virtues of a great character. But unfortunately, they are denigrated, isolated and tormented by the patriarchal domination. They refuse to be hidden behind the roles and patterns set for their lives by their families and their cultures. Chitra Banerjee delineates modern Indian woman’s liberation from the male dominated society. Her depiction of feministic atmosphere is an indication of women’s self-uplifting for their enlightened growth and progress.

Women like Sudha, Anju, Abha, Meena, the nameless heroines in “The Disappearance” and “The Word Love” and Lalita leave their husbands deliberately, a necessary step on the way of self-reliance and for a brighter life of their own. Chitra Banerjee firmly believes that change is inevitable and mandatory. She seems to suggest that while India should be proud of her long-cherished spiritual, social and cultural heritage, it should also recognise and accept the positive aspects of modernization.

Chitra Banerjee’s characters can be compared with Tolstoy’s Anna, Flaubert’s Emma, and Ibsen’s Nora, all desiring to break traditions and traditional values. Sudha in Sister of My Heart and The Vine of Desire, Lalita in The Mistress of Spices and the nameless protagonist of “The Disappearance” are bold enough to leave their house and march forward to prove themselves. Then comes the conflict between tradition
and modernity and they undergo various painful experiences. But that helps them in their journey from innocence to maturity. She portrays the tension between the family tradition and individual freedom. The central characters of the novels are woven to highlight the social and cultural polarities.

With the advancement of education and growing desire for economic independence, women like Geeta and Daksha in *The Mistress of Spices* and Meera in “A Perfect Life” started taking up jobs. The female protagonists like the nameless heroine in “The Word Love,” Abha and Meena in “Affair” overcome a deeply-rooted sense of guilt and wish to take up a job to lead a life of their own. Despite their education, acquired independence, and increasing self-confidence, characters like Sudha and Anju are not completely free from nagging doubts of cultural transgression. To a certain extent the stories are subversive by cutting at the roots of the prevailing order and organizing principle of the Indian family and community; the sting in the tail is perhaps the women’s awareness that “the old rules are not always right but their trace is permanently etched in their consciousness” (Hand 76).

Chitra Banerjee’s women characters want freedom from the bondage of tradition. They try to find freedom and happiness not only for themselves but also for others. Through the depiction of Tilo and Mrs. Gupta, she successfully gives the message that women need to have concern for the well-being of a larger society.

In the domestic sphere, the patriarchy has been countered by strong, intelligent and sensitive women, who have taken certain unprecedented decisions and emerged as women with well-defined selfhood. Thus, all the women characters like Sudha, Anju, Tilo, Lalita, Rakhi, Asha, Abha, Meena, Preeti, Meera, Jayanti, Sumita, and the nameless protagonists of “The Disappearance,” and “The Word Love” learn to love themselves and also become aware of the womanist tradition of self-reliance and self-
esteem. The novelist holds that it is the heroines’ retreat in their own selves rather than in any external crutches which injects a hope for the woman’s redemption from her predicament. She observes that a gradual shift in values and a new angle of vision have been wrought by the British contact which in many ways has proved delectable. Not only women characters but also men characters like Sunil, Sonny and Mr. Gupta become the embodiment of freedom.

Chitra Banerjee’s treatment of feminism is different in the sense that her protagonists are generally not rebellious in nature; rather they suffer only to learn how to face the harsh realities of life. Each character rises to the occasion by asserting her individuality, choosing to live her own life and overcoming strange and difficult circumstances and finally emerges as a victor. They make the best of what they can of their life. When they have a chance, they struggle and discover happiness, and at other times they settle for whatever best they can do, rather than stagnate under male suppression.

The female protagonists of Chitra Banerjee are not the representations of traditional ‘Sita’ images. They are the ‘new women,’ who could be likened to the flooding rivers that find a pathway into crevices and holes. The act of confrontation gives them the courage to decide things for themselves and increasingly lead them to a positivistic detachment from life. The refuge in the self guides them towards a deeper awareness of their predicament.

Chitra Banerjee has been able to probe into the depths of the consciousness of her protagonists. The protagonists are guided by a self-awareness which propels them towards self-assertion. From the limited sphere of the traditionally ordained roles of daughter, wife and mother, each protagonist strives for an identity of her own. The novels reflect the Indian women’s long and troublesome journey from tradition to
modernity. The novels present the complexities which pull society in two opposing directions one towards the traditional culture and nationalism and the other towards modernization and in some cases westernization.

Thus the Indian woman has begun to realise that marriage in most cases acts as a deterrent—it is not a loving and equal partnership. It cuts a woman off from the mainstream of life and prevents her from achieving her goals. Whenever women have stepped out of their confines, they have to struggle against the fixed image of women in the minds of men and women. Moreover, they try to overcome prejudices and dual standards prevalent in society. The modern Indian woman strives to lead the life of a normal human being with equal dignity. She does not wish to succumb to the pressures of patriarchy, marginality, and helplessness. To establish a viable relationship with family members, the Indian woman must be free from the bondage of conventions and subordination inbuilt in patriarchal societies.

The diasporic predicament in relationships is well wrought out by Chitra Banerjee when she lets her protagonists take different roads, quite opposite of those travelled by their immigrant parents. This is where the cultural and familial ties are broken in the unaccustomed earth. They all become strangers in their own worlds and have to fend for their own survival in diaspora. The women characters of Chitra Banerjee follow different home culture, culture of origin, the culture of adoption. With a clear vision and careful introspection, they understand that a brave new world is waiting for them and that bold decisions have to be made by them to reach that new universe.

Topics such as, free love is especially sensitive for the usually conservative Indian American community—one that is often labelled as a ‘model minority.’ On one hand the first-generation immigrants try to preserve their ‘home cultures,’ and on the
other hand they also try and groom their children for the American way of life. As an Asian woman expatriate in America, Chitra Banerjee uses her novels as the socio-political commentary of both the Asian and the Western societies. Like Hawthorne, she says that the whole of the earth is available for humanity to explore and cultivate for purposes of making it habitable. Chitra Banerjee’s novels are rewarded as an ambitious endeavour to outline the life of a woman engaged in a serious quest for values. Being an issue of widespread contemporary interest, this suggests an important link in the chain of the “new literature” that is written at present by women and about women. There is neither a strong sense of nostalgia about the past nor a sense of loss of a glorious heritage represented in her novels.

Chitra Banerjee portrays faithfully the trauma of cultural dislocation, disorientation and displacement suffered by millions of “exiled Indians” as they try desperately to balance themselves between “home and abroad.” She offers her view of immigrant attitudes and thus insight into the literature of immigration. Stressing on the similarity between the experiences of all immigrants from the Third World, she asserts that America offers “romanticism and hope” to those coming out of the cultures of “cynicism, irony, and despair.” America, she insists, offers the opportunity to “dream big” and to “pull it off,” – actions that are not possible in a traditional society.

Indian women immigrants naturally have the ability to build a bridge of understanding between two cultures as they are trained to be adaptable, to accommodate themselves in the husband’s families, the husband’s lifestyles. Chitra Banerjee also shows that most of the second generation people adjust well and make a space for themselves in the new country. The ‘voiceless, invisible’ woman learns the art of adopting an American way of talking, walking and dressing. Indian Americans
are conscious of their Indianism, whereas, Americanized Indians care for their oneness with the alien culture. The protagonists struggle to cling to the mainstream American society by virtue of the melting pot paradigm, accepting the new in the interest of maintaining the old order of ethnicity and cultural values in the new world.

In an interview with Katie Bolick, Chitra Banerjee says that distance often provides an angle in which to view reality: “moving away from a home culture often allows a kind of disjunctive perspective that is very important—a slight sense of being an outsider, being out of place.” In this celebration of homelessness and the creation of new homes, hers is a positive attitude among diasporic writing, one which exults in the sense of rootlessness and uses it as a literary stratagem to explore the possibilities of living in two worlds.

The image of the struggling woman in the margin of discourse fits very well into the new situation in America where marginality is celebrated as a source of empowerment. Chitra Banerjee counters the notion that conditions of women are same everywhere by suggesting that in America there is no single operation of power; each woman in the Third World context has to negotiate different modes of survival techniques in response to the complex nature of contingencies of existence. She is curious about the survival of her protagonists in the new surroundings. She is concerned about making an interesting picture of Indian life intelligible to American readers.

Chitra Banerjee has spent most of her career portraying the humiliation and pain, which are often associated with the Third World people adapted to North American culture. Her writings focus on those moments or processes of accepting new cultural differences. She has tried to explore transformations in one’s life and subsequent consequences in the wake of Americanization and globalization. Her
fiction is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in the Bengali communities with which she is familiar.

The women protagonists emerge bold and victorious. Survival has been their prime concern; they show an admirable resilience as well as stupendous physical and mental strength. They know how to delve into the past in order to overcome its torturous bondages; nevertheless, they do not disown the positive aspects of the past heritage. Geeta in *The Mistress of Spices* is bold enough to question her grand-father and is stubborn in her decision of marrying Juan. Racial and cultural barriers are much more than the temperamental ones which scuttle the very possibility of any coming together. Thus her works are a celebration of life as it is lived, narrated as living experiences with the objective of retrieving them from passing into oblivion.

The ‘refashioning of the self’ in America and the search for a new identity for immigrants in general, and women in particular, is an odyssey which requires sacrifices on the part of those who aspire for it. This ‘refashioning’ or ‘re-moulding’ of self is realised at the cost of scratches all around not upon the body but upon the spirit as well. The protagonists like Sumita in “Clothes,” Jayanti in “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs,” the nameless protagonist of “The Word Love,” Meera in “A Perfect Life,” the nameless heroine of “The Disappearance,” Preeti in “Doors,” Abha and Meena in “Affair,” Asha in “Meeting Mrinal,” Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams*, Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*, Tilo, Geeta and Lalita in *The Mistress of Spices* build up their new selves but ultimately end up having ‘splintered-selves,’ losing the vitality of their former life and warmth of the new.

As Chitra Banerjee lives and writes in the West, she is interested in the need for acclimatization and thereby proving the joys of immigration. She has developed
understated prose style and tells her story from many different cultural perspectives. The struggle of the Indian women in America to reclaim their identity and self-worth is depicted. Finally the immigrants in America are not caught in the process of becoming, but are portrayed as finished American products. Thus she presents the socio-political situations of the post-independent India that has entered a new terrain of the modern era. It seeks to evolve a new social paradigm in and outside India through the study of the behaviour of the marginalized people.

Through her novels Chitra Banerjee clearly says that the multiple oppressions are not confined to only one class or community, it is universal and large due to the individual and community’s lack of response to and participation in its own native culture. This soft but firm voice of Chitra Banerjee has forced the world to recognize her, not as a marginalized Indian woman writer but as an important voice in the mainstream of world literature. Her novels are a celebration of the strength of woman, not her weakness. In a language of emotion and meticulous metaphor using images provided by the woman protagonists, the novelist has articulated the many-sided pathos and rebellion of contemporary Indian woman, not only in India but also in the new world.

The novelist also suggests that the world would be a safer and happier place to live in, if men heed to the councils of women. The novelist is unambiguous and emphatic in her assessment of the malaise and her corrective: the world is in danger from power seekers, wanting to be the holders of the world. The value system of humanity is askew. It is imperative to correct the balance in favour of love, selflessness and generosity. All the selected five works, taken as a single unit, make the most exhaustive and moving portrayal of the Indian woman and can be read as an epic of female experience in the late twentieth and early twenty first century America.
The thrust of this project is on achieving woman’s emancipation and self-actualization not by a geographical shift to America but by a personality ‘honning’ through acculturation to different identities. The protagonists take on finally to realise that the crux of self-actualization is the exercising of not the Indian or American but the human right to be at peace with herself.

Thus Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s novels *Arranged Marriage, Sister of My Heart, The Mistress of Spices, Queen of Dreams* and *The Vine of Desire* act as a bridge between transformation and migration and pile up meticulous details and information as she recaptures history in the most aesthetic sense. The common aspect of all her novels is the journey from subjugation to emancipation through conflicting issues of the oppression of the Indian women; their education; and the effect of westernization or ‘development’ on them. These novels not only thematize the issues of diaspora, but also reveal the cultural collisions and speak of the importance of transnational linkages in the globalised world.

Thus Chitra Banerjee’s collection of short stories and novels convey a message of great human worth of women in the family, reconciliation and cultural identity by challenging and rewriting the old rules to unfurl their emancipation and this thesis emphasises her words during an interview with the researcher on 31.01.2012 through e-mail: “I believe in women being allowed to live a life of dignity and being able to make their own choices in important areas of their lives.”

The subject of the present study recommends further research perspectives. There are innumerable ideas and issues which can be interpreted and studied in detail. There are theoretical frameworks and concepts which can be applied and analytical thoughts can be extracted. There is possibility of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research in Chitra Banerjee’s works.
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s novels are not only rich in themes but also in the variety of techniques and devices employed. A comparative study can be carried out with other writers who have used similar themes, myths and imageries. Studies on narrative techniques like magic realism also can be done. Social practices and concepts like arranged marriage, love marriage and inter-racial marriage can be made the subject of a research study. The role of women and her responsibility towards the upliftment of the society is an inspirational idea. Most importantly the concept of immigration and its treads can be undertaken for a study. Women’s empowerment, politics, racial discrimination, alienation, search for identity and existentialism are also related areas that have a wide scope for further research.