1. INTRODUCTION

The reviewers have placed Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as a well-known poet, short story writer and novelist. Her literary work has been widely known, as she published her work over fifty magazines including ‘Atlantic Monthly’ and ‘The New Yorker’, and also has been included in over fifty anthologies that has been translated into twenty languages including Dutch, Hebrew and Japanese. In the wake of globalization, the writers of Indian diaspora have set a distinctive trend of fictional perspectives. Their writing represents an uncompromising quest for the assimilation in alien sensitivity and relationship is known in the realm of Indian fiction. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni with the strength of her narrative captures the crucial moments of life at the crossroad moments caught between past and present, excitement for the West and the longing for the East, along with the conflict of tradition and modernity.

Chitra Divakaruni was born in India in 1956 in Calcutta, daughter of R. K. and Tatini Banerjee, she left Calcutta and came to the United States in 1976. She continued her education in English literature. She received her master’s degree from Wright States University in Dayton, Ohio and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. To earn money for her education she held many odd jobs including babysitting, selling merchandise in an Indian boutique, slicing instruments in a science lab. At Berkeley she lived in the International House and worked in the dining hall. She lived in Illinois, Ohio and in Northern California, which she writes about. Devakaruni currently teaches in the nationally ranked University of Houston. She is also working on the advisory board of ‘Maitry’ in San-Fransisco, Bay area, and ‘Daya’ in Houston. Both these are the organizations that help South Asian American Women, who find themselves in abusive or domestic violence. She is also working on the board of ‘Pratham’, an organization that helps, educate children, particularly those who are living in urban slums in India. Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni has judged several prestigious awards such as the, ‘National Book Award’ and ‘the PEN Faulkner Award’. Chitra Banerjee’s literary work deals with the immigrant experience, an important theme in the mosaic of American society. Regarding the immigrant situation, in her recent interview, Bharati Mukherjee has clearly and aptly stated.
“We immigrants have fascinating tales to retell. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries, which are placed by civil and religious conflict,… when we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must know about 200 years of American society. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to explore Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country.” (Interview Times of India, Oct. 1, 1989)

Chitra Divakaruni, in her writing explores the newly settlers in America. These migrated people from one country travelled to the other, in other words they are caught between two cultures. The migrated people have longing for their home country and its culture as well as they have to live in the culture of other nation. Regarding the migrated people in ‘Jasbir Jains’ article, she describes:

“Writers, who have moved away from one culture to another, are caught between two cultures, and are very often engaged either in a process of self recovery, through resort to history and memory or in a process of self preservation through an act of transformation.” (2003; 101)

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni attempts to solve their domestic problems and issues from their encounter with the native culture. The immigrant women suffered from local people. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents the experiences of the immigrants. While expressing it she aptly says:

“A listener, a facilitator, a connector to people”, and “to me the art of dissolving boundaries is what living is all about. …Women in particular respond to my work because I am writing about them, women in love, in difficulties, 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 in real life” (Softky Elizabeth, 18 Sept. 1997)
The novelist thus presents the oppressed women in her novels. These women suffer twice, one from their native culture and second from the culture of foreign country as well. Another reviewer, Julie Mehta, regarding Indian community’s image and reinforcing stereotypes of the “oppressed” Indian woman, says, “Some just write about different things, but my approach is to tackle these sensitive topics. I hope people who read my book will not think of the characters as Indians but feel for them as people”(Black Issue, 18 Sept. 1997).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni writes about what she feels strongly about and one of these is the complicated position of Indian women and their challenges. She writes about many positive things, about strong family bonds, and the courage of people who find themselves in a different world after immigration. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni writes about the complicated life of Indian women, she writes about many strong family bonds and the courage of people who find themselves in a different world, she also presents such biocultural experiences and cultural confrontation. The diasporic sensibility suggests this situation. Regarding this Prof. Harish Trivedy says about the psychology of this community emphasizing on their search for making and remaking of identities, “It may be useful to look at the whole phenomenon as a transaction….. as an interactive dialogue, two way process rather than a simple active, passive one; as a process involving complex negotiation and exchange”(1993:15).

The migrated people want to return back to their mother country as they suffer from new situation dominated by the native culture. Salman Rushdie, thus writes about the divided psyche of the migrated people. In the life of immigrants, their longing to return to their home is not only to satisfy their nostalgia, but to reclaim the past and to recreate a collective history and myth of their people. The narrative of Shame confesses:

“What is the best thing about the migrant people? I think their hopefulness… and what is the worst thing’ it’s the, emptiness of one’s luggage… We have come unstruck from more than one land. We have floated upward from history and from memory, from time”(1983; 47)
Another critic also focuses on the ‘divided psyche’ of the migrated people, their cultural base, the separation of these people from their old traditional home culture. The experience of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni about geographical locations, separation from cultural root and the detachment from tradition, motivates a “fractured psyche” affecting the balance of personality is expressed by Berry Lopez. About it the reviewer further says:

“I want to talk geography as a shaping force, not a subject… a specific and a particular setting of human experience and endeavour is, indeed, central to work of many nature writers, I would say a sense of a place is also critical to the development of a sense of morality and human identity.” (1976:07)

Thus, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novels has presented Indian people, particularly women living in the culture of other nation. The novelist presents cultural, social, religious and spiritual life of Indian immigrants. These people have carried their Indian culture in the form of food items, the names of spices, the customers come to the shop of Tilo, not only to get the spices but also solve their domestic problems. Here are the efforts therefore to investigate and find out cultural aspects in the novel. As these expatriates are living in America, the transnationality is also reflected in the novel.

Much of Divakaruni’s works deal with immigrant experience as in her book *Arranged Marriage* (1995), winner of an American Book Award, is a collection of short stories about women from India caught between two cultures. In *The Mistress Spices* (1997), named one of the best books of the 20th century by the San Francisco Chronicle, the heroine Tilo provides spices, not only for cooking, but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants in her shop experience. In *Sister of My Heart* (1999), two cousins – one in America, the other in India, share details of their lives with each other and help each other solve problems that threaten their marriages. In her another novel *One Amazing Thing* (2010), a group of strangers of varied background, trapped by an earthquake in an Indian visa office, discover what they have in common as the struggle to save themselves. *Queen of Dreams* (2004), is her fourth novel, in which the narrative alternates between the understood
and the mystical. In fact it seems that Divakaruni is a secret purveyor of magic realism, where the things we do understand (such as dreams) can be at least partially explained and made sense of thought a kind of magic. Her other novels are: *The Palace of Illusion* (2008), *The Conch Bearer* (2008) and *Oleander Girl* (2013).

This part of the chapter focuses on the selected novels by Chitra Divakaruni, in which cultural elements and transnationality are scattered. The selected novels *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams*, will be closely examined and investigated for revealing cultural reflections at the transnational level. Both these novels basically deal with the life and experience of expatriate Indian women. In this process, Indian culture crosses the boundaries of cultural, social, religious and spiritual life. The novelist thus, presents a kind of encounter between Indian cultural activities with the American society. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, thus, depicts these diasporic Indians in the transnational era. Before the actual attempt to analysis of these novels and revealing the cultural aspects, scattered everywhere in the novels, it is better to focus on certain elements as a background survey to the literary work, particularly fictions of Divakaruni. In the diasporic situation, a phenomenon that together with the post ethnic vision has proved necessary in order to rethink Asian/American Studies.

1.1 Review:

The post-colonial background is presented in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, where people get enough freedom to express their experiences. The novels of Divakaruni can be studied and examined with the diasporic background. ‘Ethnic studies’ is the phenomenon of post-nationalism from the postcolonial perspective. Meena Alexander in this regard argues, “The question of colonialism flood into an era of decolonization, into the complicated realm of American ethnicity”(1996:05).

The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization. Texts are now crossing the borders of nation and culture, as new emerging authors express myriad voices of those once considered the subaltern. Particularly Chitra Divakaruni has distinguished herself as among the ground breaking novelists in the genre of South Asian diasporic literature. A reviewer, Vijay Prasad says:
“Her accounts of the experience of the diaspora and its effects up on women not only provide the readers with insight into the lives of the 1.4 million South Asians who currently reside in the United States, but also presents a model with which can better understood the processes through which minority identities are constructed.” (1998:02)

The new novel, expresses changing psyche of the immigrant people, the contemporary novelists describe it in new and modern language, which is different from old and traditional English language. As another critic, Padma Rangaswami in her novel Namaste America, in the relation to this new, changed nature of modern novel, says:

“The post 1965 Indian immigrant women are different breed together… as articulated and organized professionals, they have expressed themselves in literature and recorded her immigrant experiences for prosperity, still she has not received fair share of focused attention… even though she represent half of the immigrant population.” (2000:147)

Yet, in the evaluating and examining the selected novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, one can begin to paint a rough picture of the South Asian diasporic experience in the United States. For Divakaruni this experience is best characterized by a state of diasporic communities, which is created by the constant oscillation between contradictory, conceptions, of race, culture, time, geography. As a result of existing in this ‘in-between’ space. The South Asian women living in America develop all altered consciousness. In order to relate to her South Asian culture while at the same time adapting to her current American surroundings. W. E. B. Du Bois regarding an altered consciousness condition, writes about the minds of Americans.

About the Americans, living in the Southern United States, he says:

“It is a strange thing, this double consciousness, this sense of belonging always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others… one ever feels his twoness, an American, a negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two worrying ideals in one dark body.” (1996:102)
With these thoughts, we have an idea about the complex psyche of the South Asian Women in America. Various women in Divakaruni’s texts are caught between the traditional customs of South Asia from which they emerged with the more westernized culture of America. W. E. B. Du Bois further says that Divakaruni’s characters move beyond a duality and toward a condition that is more complex and divided:

“The women that Divakaruni created are capable of living in world in which the individual exists not as a unified one, but rather as many, bound by no borders and infinite in the possibilities and inventing identities.”(1996:102)

The changing condition and consciousness of people in modern period is presented by the modern novelist. This changed situation is presented in the literary work of Divakaruni. Another reviewer Frantz Fanon therefore explores the impact of altered space up on one’s consciousness in the colonial context describing the experience of existing in such a luminal space as:

“Consciousness of the body is solely a negative activity. It is a third person consciousness; the body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty… A slow composition of myself as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world- such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive because it creates a real of the world, definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world.”(1967:110 111)

Tilo’s gift is her ability to read into the lives of all those who enter her store, seeing all of the problems they endure as they assimilate feeling their daily suffering and understanding. The protagonist, Tilo is forbidden to look in a mirror while she lives in Oakland and fulfils her duties as a mistress of spices. The protagonist Tilottama, an Indian immigrant lives in the surrounding of American people, possesses two cultures, the Indian by birth and American by migration. A reviewer, Vindu Goel, notes:
“In the end (After much soul searching) you realize that you are simply yourself an amalgam of cultural contradictions.”(1988; 19)

Another critic estimates Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as transitional novelist as her protagonist of the novel The Mistress of Spices remembers her past life while living in a new culture of America. Border crossing of the protagonist results in transnationality. America is a land of flux because of the onslaught of alliance, the unwanted immigrants. It is a land with a mythical past and epic present a multicultural postmodernism. By the universality of her work, characters and themes, Chitra Divakaruni. “Holds unto a unique brand of what Appadurai calls modernity at large”(Appadurai, 1997; 58). Appadurai estimates of global culture, which is “a complex, overlapping, disjuncture order that cannot any larger be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models. Appadurai calls Divakaruni as: “the literary ethnologist” (1997; 53).

Tilo and her spices are potent presences. The cast of characters is really disenfranchised ranging from immigrants Indians (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Bangladesh) to the disempowered, hyphenated American citizens. The inclusion of Kwesi, the African American, Juan the Mexican—American, and Raven, the Native American makes the novel a theater of global culture. Appadurai says about the globalization implied in the novel as:

“The current multiplicity of the uses that surrounds three words, meaning, discourse and text should be sufficient to indicate that, in their widest sense… word encompasses all forms of textualized expression and world can meaning anything from the means of production and the organization of life worlds to the globalized relations of cultural reproduction.” (1996;03)

Thus, Divakaruni can be grouped partially, at least with some other emerging South Asian Writers who are toiling to shift paradigms. “Writers such as Vandana Shiva, Arundhati Roy, Meera Sayal and others such as Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, for example are self consciously engaging with global realities to take on the world in all is multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, techno economic universeness.
1.2 Magical Realism:

There are several definitions of Magical Realism, one of the standard and apt definitions is:

“Magical Realism may be defined as the free expression by objective means of the subjective feelings of an individual or group, as through are, music, poetry, dancing etc. Painting where real forms are combined in a way that does not conform to daily reality.” (Webster. 1977)

The term Magical Realism has been used in Europe, Africa, Australia, the United States and Latin America for many years. The official use of the term was in 1925, by the German Franz Roh, an art critic who applied it to some of the paints he studied. While contrasting the term Magical Realism to Expressionism he said, “In opposition to Expressionism, the autonomy of the objective world around us was once more to be enjoyed; the wonder of matter that could crystallize into objects was to be seen anew” (Franz Roh, 1968:113).

Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli discusses about Magical Realism used in both painting and literature as, “This is pure twentieth centristm, which rejects both reality for the sake of reality and fantasy for the sake of fantasy, and lives with the sense of magic discovered in the daily life of human beings and things” (Menton, 1983:52). For woman novelist and magic realist, Isabel Allende, the Magical Realism is a way of seeing life including the emotional and the spiritual aspects, and is particularly apparent in the literature of underdeveloped countries, due to the daily contact with violence and misery which sends the writer into the world of supernatural searching for explanation and hope. Among the invisible elements of Magical Realism she finds myths, legends, superstitions, history, passions, obsessions and magic.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni admits to having been inspired by the works of Gabrial Garcia Marquesz, Isabel Allende and other magic realists, “I was very influenced by them, that whole magical universe that they create. Magic is very important in my work.” (Bauer). Ethnic American women novelists writing in varying
cultural traditions, such as Alice Walker, Louise Erdrich, Amy Tan, Cristina Graccia and Chitra Divakaruni share affinity for portraying the everyday reality as consisting of magic and myth, the mundane and the real, the sacred and the profane in order to voice the unique and multiple ethnic American women’s experiences. Regarding the use of Magical Realism in her novel, *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni says, “The spices are used for more than flavourings. They have magical powers all their own, and they provide remedies for physical maladies as well as cures for spiritual ills” (Marcus, *The Spices of Life*, 1997).

Chitra Divakaruni unlike Salman Rushdie makes the use of magic realism. Magic realism is the technique mostly used advent garde writers where entered texts, breaks through rigorous realism in fantastical forms. It is a form most expressive of the contemporary sensibility where marginalized and colonized cultures and consciousness may fracture constructed reality in fabulous forms to express their own heightened sense of reality. Salman Rushdie has mastered the technique of magic realism used by Gabrial Garcia Marquez and Ben Okri, in his work, *Midnight’s Children*, a reviewer Aizaz Ahmed finds:

“Rushdie is able to amalgamate the third world technique of magic realism and the western modernism because there are multiple determinations at work in any text and he occupies a “space of overlap” (1994:126).

Within the South Asian context, Rushdie and Arundhati Roy in her *God of Small Things* uses wonderful moments of magic realism, especially in those parts where she calls socio-cultural orthodoxy into question. Divakaruni in her novels also has used mysticism. She has mised this by substituting God with Tilo’s private belief system and granting her sovereign authority to perform personalized rites on behalf of the individual customers who come to her grocery store.
2. THE MISTRESS OF SPICES:

2.1 Introduction:

As Chitra Divakaruni passed her major time in America in San Francisco, Bay Area, so, she says about it as, “I have lived in Houston and the San Francisco, Bay Area for many years. Houston has appeared in one book. I have to know a place very well before I write about” (Pais, The Rediff Interview). About the same she again says, “Bay Area is definitely the best part of this country and is most cosmopolitan and the most multicultural” (Pias, Profile of SAJA Speaker). In the South-western region of America number of people migrated from various nations possessing their cultures and way of life. A critic, Gunn Allen describes this region as, “Magical, a place where mistery and myth are as factual as every day as any other aspect of contemporary life in the United Sates” (1997:343-344).

The protagonist of the novel, *The Mistress of Spices* Tilo, have magic power, runs a ethnic grosery store of spices. Regarding it Gunn Allen further says that Tilo’s profession is magically real, for in, “The Southwest, land of enchantment, where for the most part reality is magical” (1997:355), she opens a spice bazaar and with the help of spices, spiritual and magico-religious rituals, she intuits and procures medicines for the ailments of her fellow South Asians. Another critic Leonard K I, says about the business run by South Asian women in America as:

“It is South Asian women [...] who serve as cultural consultants for other immigrants and also for non-South Asian shoppers. They shape cultural tastes on a dilay basis, helping diverse customers to formulate ideas about what is Indian, or Pakistani, or Bangladeshi. The ethnic grocery stores provide many other goods and services: cookbooks along with the foodstuffs, audio and video cassettes, clothing and even supplies for religious rituals [...] The entrepreneural South Asian women in their grocery stores advise many customers not only about cooking but about variety of cultural matters.” (1997:87)
The comments of famous critic Carmen Faymonville about Chitra Divakaruni’s novel, *The Mistress of Spices* is very important, “Divakaruni’s *The Mistress of Spices* reminiscent of an immigrant novel, features the West symbolizing a promise of a brand new life, in which the protagonists test their willpower and strength, learn survival tactics, and negotiate their identity and loyalties, while shuttling between cultures, histories, and traditions. The encounter between the American mythology of individualism, an established feminist tradition and the Eastern practice of female obedience and invisibility” (2001:253), results in new Western narratives concerned with spiritual survival of an integrated self, transgression of boundaries, literal and metaphorical, in order to reinvent oneself across, and even despite cultures, religions, histories and myths.

Another critic, Inderpal Grewal observes this novel as employing, “an exotic aesthetic” consisting of Hindu mysticism and ancient wisdom from India. Thus allowing the heroine to “resist the colonial discourses of the victimized Indian women” (2005:75), by using spices for both, ethnic cuisine and the spiritual tradition of healing, “This narrative of ancient and modern [...] sutures the world of late-twentieth century cosmopolitan travel and cuisine with American cultural feminism’s new transnational spiritualities that enable non-western goddesses. Exotic power is empowerment, and feminism and exoticism are first demarcated and then reconciled. Exotic spices enable women to become feminist subjects by using their magical and healing qualities to fight patriarchal Indian traditions” (2005:77).

*The Mistress of Spices* is an autobiographical novel. Unlike her protagonists in her novels, she migrated from India into America. Divakaruni’s protagonist Tilo has particular power, spiritual power like magic, with the help of it she solves all the problems of immigrated people from India around her. The dying, deadly pains during her caesarean surgery at the time of her delivery, taught Divakaruni many things. During this period she experienced boundaries between life and death. Divakaruni’s encounter with death has affected her deeply. She felt as though floated between states of life and death. Divakaruni’s grandfather, during her childhood days would tell the stories from the Ramayan and Mahabharat, the ancient Indian woman. Divakaruni, loved the great women of the epics, Sita, Draupadi and Queen Kunti and their devotion for their life. The aloneness of the epic heroines seemed strange even to
her even as a child. Thus, Divakaruni got inspiration for writing the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. The novel and its theme moves around an Indian girl with her magical power, as she says, ‘Yes, they all held magic, even the everyday American spices you toss unthinking into your cooking pot’ (Divakaruni. 2005:03).

When Tilo falls in love with an Indian American, she must choose between her magic and a more mundane life. Her difficulties arise when she realizes that she must abandon her own wants to maintain the magical power that she craves, there are certain rules and restrictions on Tilo, as she has become the mistress of spices, for instance, Tilo will not become overly involved in her customer’s lives, that she never leave her store and venture out into the streets of Oakland, that she refrain from using her power for her own benefit, and most important that she does not pursue love, in short, that she must live for others and not for herself. Shashi Tharoor, in the ‘Loss Angels Times Book Review’ says:

“Divakaruni has written an unusual, clearer and often exquisite first novel that stirs magical realism into the new conventions of calinary fiction and the still simmering caldron of Indian immigrant life in America.”(Book Review)

### 2.2 Textual Analysis:

The protagonist of the novel, Tilottama who calls herself as a Mistress of spices with the help of magic power, she solves all the issues and problems in the life of immigrants. The novel opens with the introduction to the protagonist and the narrator herself, “I am a Mistress of spices... But the spices are my love” (Divakaruni, 2005:03). On the island, Tilo learned a magic power, with which she tries to solve all the difficulties and problems of the immigrants around her in Oakland, California. Tilo further says:

“I know their origins, and what their colours signify and their smells. I can call each by the true name it was given at the first, when the earth split like skin and offered it up to the sky. Their heat runs in my blood. From *amchur* to *zafran*, they bow to my command. At a whisper they yield up to me their hidden properties, their magic powers.” (03)
The novelist describes that there are also other shops in Oakland, apart from Tilo’s grocery shop. There is Rosa’s Weekly Hotel, Lee Ying’s serving machine and Vacuum Cleaner Repair. There is also the description of spice bazaar, where, food items are sold, they, are: atta, basmati rice and masoor dal and other things. Thus, the names of food items and mithais reflect Indian culture in California. There are more food and mithai items as they are emerald, green burfis, rasogullaha, laddus, all these names, indicate that Indian culture has crossed the national borders as the Indians have migrated to the other countries. Tilo, about their life in America describes, “I should have been here always, that I should understand without words their longing for the ways they chose to leave behind when they chose America” (04).

Tilottama enters on the island by shipwreck on which there are only women. She possesses power of magic training on island. Tilo, after her training through Shampati’s fire she is transformed as the mistress. Tilo introduces herself as, “No. One more thing is mine. My name which is Tilo, short for Tilottama, for I am named after the sun burnished sesame seed, spice of nourishment” (05).

The old one, The First Mother trained Tilo on the island. The old mother instructs her as, “You are not important, No Mistress is. What important is the store and the spices.” (05). The spices are also used to solve various problems of the people. Tilo has to pray to the spices for the people. Her prayer is as, “I will chant, I will administer, I will pray to remove sadness and suffering as the Old One taught. I will deliver warning” (07).

Tilottama is also called Nayan Tara, the star of the eye. It also means a star seer. It is also called to flower that grow by the road. In this way, in the first part of the novel, Tilo is introduced, and how she enters in Oakland, California. In a way, it shows that how Indian culture and the culture of America live hand in hand in the contemporary period. As the novel is located in the American city Oakland, California, it indicates that there are transnational aspects reflected in it.

Chitra Divakaruni thus, through her protagonist gives the importance of each spice, which are: Tilo, Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafoetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, Kala Jira, Neem, Red Chilli, Makardhwaj, Lotus Root, and Sesame. Each spice has a special day. Cinnamon has Thursday. Fenugreek has Tuesday, Asafoetida-
Friday, Fennel has Wednesday, Peppercorn has Monday, etc. Turmeric is very useful for different purposes. Since the ancient period, it has been used at the time of wedding it is applied to bride and bridegroom to make them fresh and good-looking, “It will erase blemishes and wrinkles, suck away age and fat. For day’s afterward, your skin will give off a pull golden glow”(13).

For turmeric it is Sunday. It is also called in India Halud, meaning yellow, colour of daybreak. Turmeric, the preserver keeping foods safe in a land of heat and hunger. Turmeric the auspicious spice placed on the head of new born for luck, sprinkled over coconuts at pujas, rubbed into the border of wedding saris. The spice speaks to Tilo, it is her magic power:

“I am turmeric who rose out of the ocean of milk when the devas and asuras churned for the treasures of the universe. I am turmeric who came after the poison and before the nector and thus lie in between...
You are turmeric, shield for hearts sorrow, anointment, for death, hope for rebirth.” (13-14)

Thus, the importance of turmeric has been seen since an ancient time in Indian civilization and culture. The immigrant Tilo, from India, remembers the importance of turmeric for different purpose. Divakaruni, through the spices and its ingredients, creates Indian atmosphere in Oakland, California. In other words it creates transnationality, as all the immigrant Indians, living in Oakland, California, around Tilo and her grocery shop. Each and everybody visits the shop for purchasing spices. Tilo, along with the spices, she gives solutions on the domestic and social issues of these people. She also tells the importance of each and every spice item, in order to cure them and their sickness. Ahuja’s wife, Lalita comes to Tilo in order to purchase Masoor Dal, Atta, Jeera and useful things in her kitchen. Unlike India, their every day begins with Namaste that is with Indian culture, “Sometimes I wonder if there is such a thing as reality, an objective and untouched nature of being. Or if all that we encounter has already been changed by what we had imagined it to be. If we have dreamed it into being”(16).
The stories to the children in the family of Divakaruni narrated by grandfather at the bed time influenced her more. The stories of animals and birds, particularly, the parrot stories. The children saw parrots by the side of rivers. The animals and birds speak with the characters. They gave her new name, “Bhagyavati, Bringer of Luck, for so I was to be for them” (19). The birds also like Tilo. So they planned to make her chief of them. She in this regard says, “I overthrew the chief to become queen of the pirates (for what else I could be I did not know, that pain ate at me. Vengeance did not appease it, as I had thought it would”(19). Divakaruni describes Tilo’s visit to the island where she lives among the snakes. In Hindu culture it is said that the snake or Nagraj guarding mounds of treasure. The mythological meaning of snake, the changed name of Tilo on the island Surpa Kanya, Snake Maiden, under the ocean, Samudra Puri, sleeps. The spices are taken from the island where snakes are present. The same thing is seen in America, “I have heard that here too in America, in the ocean that lies beyond the red gold bridge at the end of the bay, there are serpents” (25).

The whole action of the novel begins late one evening in India, continues via enchanted island to America through the next day, and ends the next morning with the San Francisco earthquake. One of her first customers in the Oakland shop is Haroun, the taxicab driver, a Muslim from Kashmir, who wants his “palm read.” Tilo with her power plans and designs her answer and solution in the life of immigrants and makes their life happy. As she calls herself, “I Tilo architect of the immigrant dream”(28). Jagjit learned few English words which shows his interest in foreign language. Jagjit comes to the store with his mother to get sabu papads, “Jagjit who has learned his first English word. Idiot, Idiot, Idiot”….Asshole, is the second word”(38).

The Indian culture rules the American culture, as Divakaruni implements it in her novel. Each and every smallest and simple practice of culture is described by the novelist. There is reference now and then to Indian culture, and also of religious, spiritual aspects in the novel. The meaning of the name Til of Tilo, is life giver, restorer of health and hope. It is also the name of the most beautiful apsara of Rain God, Indra’s court. Tilottama, most elengent of dangers, crest-jewel among women. There is a religious background behind the importance of Tilo. It is said as, “But remember: When Brahma made Tilottama to be chief dancer in Indra’s court, he warned her never to give her love to man - only to the dance” (42).
Fenugreek, Tuesday’s spice, when the air is green like mosses after rain. Fenugreek, Methi, speckled seed first sown by Shabari, oldest woman in the world. The names of Indian food and sweet items indicates that the life in the part of America has Indian background. The social, religious and economic life of the immigrants living in America expresses Indian culture and traditions in America. The Indian name like biryani, jamuns, pan parag and others represent Indianess. Even the houses in which the migrated Indians life has also Indian touch.

According to old mother, the Indians live on the places like, “Toronto, Calcutta, Rawalpindi, Kaula Lumpur, Dar es Salaam. London, Dhaka, Hasnapur, Bhopal, Bombay, Lagos. Los Angeles, New Jersey, Hong Kong, Colombo, Singapore, Johansburg.” (54) Where the Indians dominated by their culture. The old mother selected only Oakland, California to Tilo to stay and start a grocery store. She says:

“‘O Tilo’, she said, ‘I must give you what you ask for, but consider, consider. Better you should choose an Indian settlement, an African market town. Any other place in the world, Qatar Paris Sydney Kingston Town Chaguanas’”. (55)

On Friday lonely American comes into the store. Tilo becomes restless and eager to wel-come him. Once a mistress has taken on her magic mistress body, she is never to look on her reflection again, “It is a rule that causes me no grief, for I know without looking how old I am, and how far from beautiful” (59). Tilo was attracted towards the American, and give him papads, rava and atta. She loves the American, who belonged to Hare Krishna tradition.

All the Indians and Indian way of life in Oakland, California, becomes dominant on the native culture. Tilo introduces ‘Makardhwaj’, a King of all. The Indians know the importance of this spice. In short, Tilo and the other migrated Indian people have created mini India in Oakland, California, as they lived with Indian cultural activities and spiritual life. Indian women are called ‘firingi women’ as they belonged to Bengal are living in Oakland, America. The American comes to Tilo and asks her to read the pulses, as the Indian check. It is Indian method of checking the sickpersons.
Tilo and Haroun, a Hindu and a Muslim are talking about the people living in Oakland. The culture of both people, live together and it is on the foreign land. The characters of Ramu and Geeta belonged to India. Geeta who is Indian and American all mixed together into a new melody. Thus the whole novel, and its each and every movement, incident and event expresses Indian culture. Culture plays very important role in the contemporary society. Other Indians, as kwesi, jagjit represent their culture.

Tilo and other Indians have changed their life style from traditional Indian to modern citizen of the world, they also have changed their clothes. The immigrants now have adopted American way of life. Tilo gives information of ginger to the migrated Indians as well as the Americans. Tilo got energy from ginger to face the American people and their culture. The Indian proverbs also become popular in America, for example, “Stop Tilo, don’t create snakes out of ropes” (129). There is another woman to purchase things for the annual, Bengali New Year celebration. A mirror is useful to her to see her American. Along with other things. She is asked as, “Tilo have you gone crazy is this way you broke the rule of boundary and stepped into America” (130).

Chitra Divakaruni describes the migrated people newly settled in Oakland, California. Along with Indians, the people belonging to other countries have settled in Oakland, California. Outside at a bus stop crowded with other strands of brown and white and black, she will get into line will that no one even raises his eyes, suspicious at her moving, “...Through the air of America so awkward-new. She will finger in pleased wonder the collar of her coat, which is better even than a clock of disappearing” (131).

The Americans are very eager to know about Indian people as well as their social, political, religious and cultural life. The narrator, regarding it says, “Sure. He’d like that. He’s real interested in Indian culture and especial our food” (136). The characters in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni travel from one place to another. The first mother in the novel can travel very easily. The novelist describes herself as a traveller. Regarding ‘First Mother’ the narrator says that she goes from one place to another, as she says, “She is a spirit travelling” (138). The conversation
between Tilo and the American takes place about the way of life in India as well as in America. They also discuss about each other’s cultural and spiritual life. Both differ in many ways, as she says, ‘Here’, I say, ‘I’ll make you a cone like we use in India (150).

Haroun likes Indian way of life, Indian culture. Before entering the house, the Indians took off their shoes at the door and move in the house without shoes. Tilo, thus tells the names of food items to Haroun, as he likes Indian culture. Haroun visits the grocery shop of Tilo because he is interested in Indian culture. The protagonist is popularly known as problem solver. As she herself says, “I Tilo who has until now been the patient listener, the solver of everyone else’s problems” (154).

Another migrated character is Raven who makes it clear that he is not original American though he lived in America since many years, who became one with the American social and cultural life. He, in this relation says:

“‘I am not surprised you thought I was white’, says the American.
‘For a long time, growing up, I thought so myself. Rather, I didn’t think of it at all, like most kids. Just accepted.’” (153)

These migrated Americans remember their past life. His mother performed ritual in the night before going to sleep. For good dreams, one must be clean and neat before going to sleep. The American tells about his early life, his mother and father:

“When I had changed into my pyjamas she would slick my hair down with water and comb it back neatly. So I could go meet my dreams looking good, she said, planting a kiss in the middle of my forehead when she was done”. (156)

The migrated Indians are very curious about their motherland. Every morning they want to know about current activities that take place in India. It reveals their longing for their country. The Indians are longing always worried about their future and plans that they get on the every step of their life. Indian ancient tradition is a great encouragement and support to the people for living happily, as “Swastik sign is painted on the walls of village homes for good luck” (171).
The culture of immigrants crosses borders with them and enter in the transnational era. Tilo, regarding the relationship between American people and Indian people in the different forms, as there are number of stories regarding this relationship. As she says, “I will split once again tonight kalo jire seeds for all who have suffered from America” (173). She further expresses her blessing for Haroun as, “Allah hu Akbar, may you be safe, in this life and always” (173).

Divakaruni later on says that the migrated Indian girls are interested in marrying Americans. The novelist, while narrating the experiences of immigrated Indians in the diasporic situation in another cultural surrounded society says that they are changing themselves, and have adopted American way of life. Tilo, who goes on Island, has completely changed. Tilo wants to see Haroun to express her sorry to him. What Tilo is going to say to him is, “I rehearse all I will say to Haroun, apology and affection and warning of the nightmare which is the back-side of his immigrant dream” (185).

All the spices sing a song for Tilo, as they love her. These spices have special power to make man’s life happy and fresh. The novelist here uses black magic power as she knows about spices, their origin and speciality. All the spices sing a song for her, titled ‘come Tilo come’:

“Come Tilo use us, we give ourselves gladly to you who have tended us so faithfully. Lotus root, Abhrak, Amalki, and most of all Makardhwaj king spice, we are yours to commend. Use us for love for beauty for your joy because that is why we were made.” (189-190)

Raven and Tilo’s closeness is described by the novelist. While talking with each other and making their love Tilo says, “Ah American, you know well how to play the strings of my mind” (196). When Tilo asks Raven about his background, he says, “Coming from your Indian culture, you probably can’t even imagine behaving this way toward your parents” (212). The novelist has presented the character of Tilo as a representative of Indian culture. The protagonist knows the origin and real meaning of every spice, which reflect Indian culture, that has crossed national border resulted in transnationality as well. About Indian culture Tilo rightly says, “The Indian culture isn’t quite what you think’, I say wryly” (213). Another character is
introduced by the novelist. He was a surgeon in Lahore army hospital before his arrival in America. He was thinking that he will be a big doctor in phoren. He says as he deeply examines the head wound Hameeda has cleaned. Raven becomes sad as he is interested in materialistic culture. He wants to go back to his old life. In his angry mood he says to Tilo as:

“Excuse me, you understand English? Our office, they’re having a potluck, we’re each supposed to bring something ethnic, you know, from our culture, make it ourselves. We didn’t have a clue’. She smiles an ingenuous smile. ‘May be you can help us?’ (255)

The novelist now talks about kingspice, makaradhwaj is useful on various things, it is used for multipurpose. Tilo requests to makardwaj to make her most beautiful on the earth, Tilo gives new life to all the Indians who live around her, she made happy Jagjit, Kwesi and many others.

As everything in the shop was sold, all the customers have gone, it was last day, now she needs Shampati’s fire for her transformation. She has broken many rules, that’s why she lost her magic power. Now she is a normal woman who wants to live a nominal life. She wants Raven’s company to live. She wrote a letter to Raven about her journey back to island for Shampati’s fire. Tilo wants her new name. One that spans his and her land, India and America, for she belonged to both now. Raven suggested her name as Maya. It has special Indian meaning which is:

“In the old language it can mean many things. Illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after day. I need a name like that, I who know have only myself to hold me up.’”(317)

Thus Divakaruni, in her novel The Mistress of Spices, portrays the character of Indian expatriate woman experiences many new things in the transnational period. The cultural reflections are there on each and every step of its development. There are number of events and incidents on which culture is reflected. The Indians crossed the border of nation and entered into vast, multicultural, transnational era.
To sum up the novel *The Mistress of Spices*, it can be emphatically said that there are many events, and incidents through which the cultural aspects and transnational elements are reflected. The protagonist, Tilo migrated from India to America expresses immigrant psychology of the people, which is divided into two parts. One deals with life and culture of home country while second part expresses the life of the migrated people, confronting with the native culture. Chitra Divakaruni, thus focuses on the problems and issues in the life of immigrant women, while living in the alien culture.
3. **QUEEN OF DREAMS:**

3.1 **Introduction:**

The novel *Queen of Dreams* (2004) selected for the present research study is the most popular in the contemporary Indian novel in English. In this novel, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni spins a fresh, enchanting story of transformation that is as lyrical as in its dramatic, “I dream the dreams of other people,’ she said. ‘So I can help them live their lives” (Divakaruni, 2004: 07). These are the words from Rakhi’s mother, the protagonist of the novel, when she was young, but now Rakhi is an adult- one in need of help to live her life. Rakhi is a young artist. She is living with her divorced mother in Berkeley, California. Rakhi is struggling for her existence with a world in transition. The life of Rakhi is torn between the lure of her mother’s past in India and assimilation in modern America.

Rakhi’s mother is a dream teller born with ability to share her family and interpret the dreams of other to foresee and guide them through their fates. She also learns the art of reading the dreams of the people and suggests solutions on the bad dreams of the immigrant people. Her gift of vision fascinates Rakhi but also isolates her from her mother’s past in India and the dream world she inhabits. Caught under the burden of her own painful secret, Rakhi’s solace comes in the discovery, after her mother’s death, of her dream journals, which being to open the long closed door to her past.

As Rakhi attempts to define her identity knowing little of India, but drawn inexorably into a sometimes painful history she is only just discovering her life is shaken by new horrors. In her wake of September 11, she and her friends must deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation, haunted by nightmares beyond her imagination. The novel is a story of an emotionally distant mother and daughter trying to find herself, transcends cultural boundaries. *Queen of Dreams* combines the elements that Divakaruni is known for the Indian American experience and magical realism. The tale succeeds on two levels. She effectively tells the reader into an immigrant culture, but she also shows the common ground that lies in a world that some would find foreign. Terry Hong in a talk with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni about

Three years after the tragic events of 9/11, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni remains haunted not only by the vivid images of what happened, but also by the repercussions felt throughout the country, especially in the South Asian American Community. Indeed, in a report released by the National Asian Pacific American legal concertium six months after the attacks, aptly titled “Backlash”; when America turned on its own. The APA community witnessed a sudden spike in anti Asian violence, especially against those of South Asian descent. Resembling the enemy literally becomes a threat to one’s life. *Queen of Dreams* to capture some of her confusion, fear and sadness surrounding the events. Ultimately, though, the novel underscores human resilience through the power of hope and forgiveness. The novel is a story of a South Asian American artist in Berkeley, who tries to come to terms with the people closest to her heart: her elusive dream teller mother, her silent father, her growing daughter, and her enigmatic ex-husband. Divakaruni admits her favourite and her own novel. she, regarding this says:

“I want to teach people, to have them think about issues they haven’t considered before, making them more compassionate towards other people,” She says. “That was my major intension with writing this book after 9/11: If I could make the plans and the hope powerful enough in the book then maybe I might stop some of the prejudice out there, and have some sort of counter reflect to what followed 9/11.”(Terry Hong, Vol. 24, 2004)

Divakaruni moved from her home in America, Bay Area to Houston, teaching in the creative writing programme at University of Houston. This question is about her adjustment with two communities, Divakaruni missed the Bay Area on many levels. Bay Area is a beautiful place with the hills and water, She is homesick for the landscape. Secondly she missed the people, different cultural backgrounds all intermingled. Houston has a small liberal community. In answering the question regarding her teaching, Divakaruni answers that she loved teaching in Houston. The program is international, multicultural with students from all over the world. She
further says that she frequently visits California in the summers. How did Queen come about? To this question from T.B.R, Divakaruni says:

“I started writing Queen when we were still in Bay Area. Right before 9/11, I was just putting together ideas for a new novel. Then 9/11 happened, and that affected me strongly on many levels. There the national tragedy itself, and then there were effects on my own community. The South Asian American Community experienced quite a bit of violent hate crimes, which other communities felt as well, like Arab Americans. Those of Sikh background really suffered. I knew I had to write about it, but wasn’t sure how to do so. She further says as; I felt I had to create an imaginative piece about 9/11 tragedy. ...I also wanted to explore the sense of mystery about the universe. Reality is not as objective. It is subjective: different people come out of the same event seeing and feeling different things. 9/11 in such an example: some reacted with great fear others with violence.” (Terry Hong, Vo. 24, 2004)

The novel questions how we arrive at our notion of reality and whether there is just one reality. The sense of mystery and image is very important in this novel. Divakaruni emphasizes that her creative writing expresses cultural heritage. The question, therefore, is whether she tried to come out of this South Asian American community in her writing, Divakaruni considers Bay Area as her home. She knows its hills, the streets, the market, the smells and sounds. She can write with authority. The other place is Calcutta where Divakaruni passed many years. Divakaruni has spent most of her time in Calcutta. Both those places have an emotional resonance for her.

Using powerful, lush and rich language that is particular to Indian English authors, Divakaruni immerses her readers into the minds of the characters who play various roles in the novel. In first chapter, she describes a dream that sets the space for the rest of the novel. Unfortunately, however from time to time the initial fast paced momentum seems to peters out but picks up again at the end of the novel. After her death, Queen of Dreams, who had played a pivotal role in the life of her daughter, leaves behind a journal of dreams Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s novel Queen of
*Dreams* set in the San Francisco Bay area, deals with conflicts and identity crises that the female protagonist Rakhi faces. The novelist develops as a first generation American of Indian-Bengali origin. The presence of culture and its elements are there in the novel, through it Rakhi’s character is developed, from national into transnational. The people from different culture come to her coffee shop creates a cultural space. With these socio-cultural elements, make Rakhi a part of a transnational community developing her as a cultural citizen. Her cultural citizenship in the transnational community creates a kind of cosmopolitanism. The novel, thus, shows that the identity as a cultural traveller of Rakhi makes her a transnational figure. This status of Rakhi is developed as her interaction with different kind of people and their cultures. With the reactions and comments from the reviewers, it is definite that Divakaruni uses number of cultural elements on different occasions in the novel. According to a well-known critic Aihwa Ong, transnationality in the theme and characters of novel, make the novelist popular at the international level, Ong talks about, “the realignment of political, social, ethnic and cultural identities due to international migration under condition of late capitalism” (2003:04).

Regarding the processes of cultural regeneration from one culture to another is depicted by the novelist. Regarding the meaning of culture, another reviewer Lowe, Lisa says, “Culture may be a much ‘messier’ process than unmediated vertical transmission from one generation to another, including practices that are partly invented”(1991:27).

Grewal Inderpal another critic emphasizes about Rakhi’s sense of belonging and rootedness within multicultural scenario. He thus argues that instead of a focus on mobility and immobility of people as the key to identity formation at the end of twentieth century. “Postcolonial discourses on the diasporas should be attentive to transnational connectivity or communities” (2001:663-701). The community at the coffee shop or at the disco, described as a transnational community. Rakhi’s interaction and participation within this community helps embody her as a cultural citizen evading the frontiers of the fixity of belonging, “This cultural citizen is also a kind of cosmopolitan, whom Grewal calls “postcolonial cosmopolitan” (2001:38).
Thus, Rakhi’s continuity of a transnational tie emerges when her chai house becomes a site for a vibrant multicultural assembly in the transformed Kurma House International. For Arjun Appadurai the term “transnational” has been used to signal the fluidity with which ideas, objects, capital and people move across borders and boundaries. While examining the production of a “public culture” within a postcolonial setting, Appadurai notes that despite a “global cultural economy”, the world is still made of “Adjuncture and difference” (1996:30).

Aihwa Ong defines Transnationalism to refer to, “The cultural specificities of global process, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of culture” (2003:04). The term, transnationalism is made more clear by a well-known critic. Inderpal Grewal and Karen Kaplan also theorize the various uses of the term “Transnational” in their essay “Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational studies of Sexuality”. According to them “diasporic groups can be best understood through the politics of cultural identity or cultural citizenship” (2001:165).

Divakaruni’s novel further ramifies the notions of belonging in the diaspora. The celebratory, fluid and syncretic sense of “Indianness that Rakhi develops at the end of the novel while dancing to Sonny’s remix is predicated on the idea that this Indianness is different from the essential mythologized entity initially identified with her ideas are now formed due to the impacts of a transnational community and cultural activity.” Rakhi’s alienation is mostly due to her inaccessibility to her cultural heritage which informs her present identity as a diasporic individual in North America. Rakhi’s multicultural, dual cultural heritage, her closeness with chai house and her attachment with her husband’s culture, sense of music.

### 3.2 Textual Analysis:

The second novel by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is selected for the close examination to investigate and find out the cultural reflections and elements which are scattered in the novel. Its theme takes place in Berkeley, California. The novel, *Queen of Dreams* basically deals with the experiences of the immigrants from India into California. As the protagonist, Rakhi and her mother migrated to Berkeley, California, her world is divided into two parts; one is her mother’s past in India, and second assimilation in modern America.
But after her mother’s death, Rakhi discovers her dream journals, writings that praise open the long closed door of her past. The novel opens with the description of a dream, in which snake talks to her mother. The mother thinks that there should be no harm to her relatives, as she says, “Don’t let it be Rakhi, don’t let it be Sonny, or Jonaki. Don’t let it be my husband, whom I’ve failed in so many ways” (Divakaruni. 2004:02).

The protagonist of the novel moves in between her past with the ancient past cultural heritage and the American realities in which she lives. While analyzing the novel in this regard, it becomes very necessary to investigate and find out the elements of culture as there are number of events and incidents in which culture is reflected. The customs and rituals, in the Indian traditional life reflect the past. At the age of eight Rakhi’s mother practiced two rituals regularly:

“Where she would tuck me in and sit on the edge of my bed a while, smoothing my hair with light fingers in the half dark, humming. The next part of our bedtime ritual consisted of storytelling. It was I who made up the stories.”(04)

Rakhi’s mother possesses a kind of power through which she reads and interprets the dreams of the people. After her death, Rakhi started reading the dreams from journals. Rakhi has already said about her mother, “My mother was a dream teller” (06). Rakhi’s paintings about India are imaginary, as she knew about her country through the stories of Indian culture. Until now, most of her paintings had been about imagined India, “an India researched from photographs, because she’d never travelled there” (10). Rakhi’s mother read the dreams of the women, who come to her to get their dream analysed, and solve their problems. Divakaruni, in this way uses magic reality and with the help of her magic power she reads the dream and suggest a solution. Belle is introduced in this chapter he goes to the chai house. The mother interpreted his dreams in two ways when someone came to her with a dream, and she explained to her what it meant men are very awkward about their dreams, ““A dream is a telegram from the hidden world’, ‘I heard her say once’ Only a fool or an illiterate person ignores it.” (34)... “My mother’s duty was to warn these angry people of what was about to happen to them” (37). The mother also informs the danger in the life of
people. To ‘Mr. Raghavendra, my mother said’, ‘I’ am calling to inform you that your life is in danger. One of the people living in your house is planning to kill you.” (40)

Rakhi’s mother reads good dreams as well as bad dreams. She also tells the solution on the issues of the Indian people in general and immigrant women in particular. She also tried to keep away immigrant women from danger in future. Rakhi’s mother helps people without any charges. The chai house is her sanctuary, the one place she has made her own much as she loves her mother. The way she loves her mother, “She doesn’t want her taking it over-the way she dominates other areas of Rakhi’s life” (47-48).

Rakhi’s character is developed by the writer on one incident, Rakhi was weeping, the mother also started. She in her words says: “I, who interpreted dreams for a worldful of strangers, would never be able to explain to my daughter what her dreams meant. I’d never be able to warn her away from the disasters of her life” (52). The novelist introduces more characters in the story of the novel. They are Kathryn and Ateliezer Jona observing painting gallery. Through the dancing of Rakhi shows her culture. Divakaruni presents Indian and American culture on each and every activity of the characters. The story itself takes place in Berkeley, San Francisco, everything that happens in the novel is at the transnational level. There are many type of dreams, through which Indian cultural and spiritual background is revealed. The dreams have mythical touch, which is:

“If you dream a close door, you will ultimately be successful in gaining what you desire. A dream of milk means you are about to fall ill. A mirror stands for a false friend a pair of scissors for a break in a marriage… If you dream you are grinding salt, you will solve the problem that is overwhelming you If someone presents you with sugar, beware. Such a person is not to be trusted.” (76)

The dream journal of Rakhi’s mother tells about the different types of dreams and their meaning, which show and reflect Indian culture. Rakhi and Sonny are planning for their Brazil tour to attend a music festival. It indicates that how Chitra Divakaruni’s characters travel with great ease. Rakhi brings a tape from the South Asian Library with songs about the Bengal monsoons. The Indian young characters
always talk about ancient Indian culture it is Jona, who expresses his wish of going to India. He says, “...before I die I would like to go to India—if only to lay to rest the ghosts that dance in my head like will—’o’-the wisps over a rippling sea” (83).

At Rakhi’s Chai House, all the people belonging to different cultural background gather and talk with each other. Along with Rakhi’s character, the character of Belle, Balwant are fully developed by the novelist. On Rakhi’s paintings, mother becomes happy and expresses her wishes. “Congratulations! My mother says, kissing me on the chicks, “your paintings are just beautiful” (94). Rakhi’s mother not only reads, interprets the dreams of the people but also tells them its meaning and results. She says about the dreams, “The dream is not a drug but a way to listen to where it can take you” (105). Rakhi, her mother and Sonny, Jona, arrange a family tour to the Golden Gate Park in Sonny’s silver B.M.W. car. In Indian religion and mythology, the birds and animals can speak, they can also dream. Rakhi comes to Calcutta on an educational trip, for her:

“Calcutta was full of dreams: not only the ones being dreamed by its present inhabitants but old, interrupted ones that hung motionless over the sluggish brown Ganga and coloured the night with their confusions.”(147-148)

Regarding the treating the elders with respect, it is an old fashioned concept that represent ancient Indian culture. Divakaruni, thus presents the modern musicians living in the other country. The representative of sikh religion, Jespal represents his folk in America. Michael’s father offers him a special cha as he says, “[I could fry up a few pakoras for you,” he suggests hesitantly. ‘Make some cha, Indian style’” (159). Jespal’s visit to Gurudwara by covering his head, represents another culture. Rakhi’s mother lives in the world “which is more fascinating than any fantasy” (163). Rakhi’s mother travelled to America, having few ancient books like Brihat Swapna Sarita for knowing how the funeral ceremony should be done. The strangers also brought another ancient text, Swapna Purana.

Some strangers arrived there and Rakhi’s father has tried to converse with them. In the chai house ancient time Indian songs are going on in modern America. The songs are being enjoyed not only by few Indians but also the audience is mostly a
mix of various races. Regarding good music, she says, “I guess good music crosses all boundaries, like good food’, I say” (196).

Through these things Divakaruni, thus implements Indian culture in California. Rakhi, by her strong desire also learned the art of reading the dreams from her mother, and from ancient books. Rakhi started selling in the Chai House Indian as well as Bengali food items, snacks, jilebis and many new snacks represent Indian culture. The people also started demanding Hindi film song from Anand, and other songs from Sholey. Some people from African America also come to the Chai House. Rakhi and other members of the family decided to change the name of Chai House as “Kurma House International.” (242) The Americans also are interested in Indian film and songs. People liked Indian Hindi film Sholey and its songs. Thus, Indian painting, filmy songs, and food items became popular in American society. Through the paintings and different pictures of Indian food items, sweets and snacks became popular in the Berkeley, California, that represents Indian culture at the transnational level. The Indian painters have taken photographs of paintings. Neither subject matter nor the style is Indian in any traditional way though one of the cosmopolitans places words from an Indian script in the midst of geometric shapes. But these modern artists have tried to present new changing picture of Indianness, “They’re Indian- but in such different ways! All this time she’s been putting boundaries around that word, too, What it can mean” (245).

The character of elder Jahnavi, an expertise in the study of dreams out of history and myth. The dreams correctly interpreted and faithfully followed, had transformed lives and nations. She further adds, the dream of sage Narad who turns into a monkey, the dream of Markandeya and the flood, the demon King Ravan’s dream of defeat and death, sent to him in warning. They all come back to me, though the years have eroded their details, “But I remember the dream of Tunga-dhwaja in the forest as though I saw it yesterday” (246). The story of ‘Tunga-dhwaja’, she explained is important because it illustrates a rare yet pivotal occurrence in dreaming.’ It was a transforming dream, where he was forgiven. The transformation of Tunga-dhwaja from a King into a beggar. It is because, in the magical forest, the king had entered a transforming dream. The novelist introduces another character, Mr. Soto, there was a big banner hanging from the store front proclaims, “PROUD TO BE
After 9/11 in America, all the migrated people considered as terrorists. In order to save from American police, the migrated people were asked to carry American flag. The atmosphere after 9/11 becomes dangerous. Every migrated person was regarded as terrorist. Sikh folk suffered more. The local people entered into the Korma House International. Jespal answered these people with great confidence he stopped these patriots. ‘Stop!’ Jespal says, “We haven’t done anything wrong. Those men in here-they were mourning. We’re Americans, just the way you are. We all feel terrible about what happened”

Jespal and Sonny got American flag, therefore police passed away. They also saved themselves from the racist Americans. One of the Native Americans said, “You ain’t an American, one of the men had said. He is a racist idiot, I tell myself”

All the dream tellers work in their sleep. They through out a thin, invisible threads, as a spider might. This thread reaches all the way to Swapna Lok,

“...The world where dreams are born. Through it the dreams that the teller needs to know travel back to her. When a teller dreams alone, the thread is thin and weak, easily broken. But when tellers live close to one another, their threads combine to form a powerful rope that can bear the weight of even the most difficult dream”

The musicians and artists are performing their dance on the songs from CD player. They are also practicing dance on the Hindi songs, Chhaiya Chhaiya. They are dancing in groups. These artists are preserving Indian culture, as they, in their American dressing sing Indian ancient songs. Rakhi, along with other girls, dances and enjoys. She tells about dreams Rakhi read the same page again and again,

“The dream comes heralding joy.
I welcome the dream….

“My life is nothing but a dream
From which I will wake into death,
Which is nothing but a dream of life”

There was a dance programme which was organised on DJ. Rakhi finds herself among a group of people who are dancing Bhangra. “Rakhi likes how the
music surprises her as it moves from ethnic to techno to drums, drums, and drums.” (306) Cultural obstacles at odds with modern ‘American Values’- Whatever they see Rakhi and her friends branded as ‘terrorist’ a label that launches them into a nightmare they could never imagine. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in this way, makes the use of cultural reflections.

Thus, Chitra Divakaruni, in her novels The Mistress of Spices and Queen of Dreams has implemented culture, Indian as well as American. The immigrated Indians carried with them Indian culture in the form of food items, names of spices, rites and rituals, customs in the novel. As these two novels take place in San Francisco, America, there are transnationalizing various aspects, which have dominated the novel. There are number of events and incidents in both the novels, that reflect Indian cultural elements and transnational aspects as well.
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