CHAPTER ONE

A Brief Survey of Indian Writing in English and

Special Place of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

1.1 Introduction

English education was introduced in India in the 19th century. English education was made available to vast Indian community. By introducing English education, Britishers wanted to create and maintain a class of administrative officers, clerks, and civil servants to govern this huge country properly. Thus, Britishers had their selfish motives behind introducing English to the Indians. Let us see carefully the key sentence in Macaulay’s Minutes:

“It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”

English education brought tremendous changes in the attitude of the Indians. The young Indians with proper education were able to read, write and speak English with competence. It made a great impact on the social, political and the religious life
of India. For the very first time, Indians became critical about both their own religious orthodoxies such as polygamy, the system of child marriages, superstitions, casteism, poverty, illiteracy and at the same time, they were critical about the British rule. Lord Macaulay’s Minutes on Indian education in 1935 and Lord Bentinck’s decision to promote European literature and science among the Indians instigated the Indians to use an alien tongue for creative expression. Indian English language and literature, thus, originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. The air of transformation touched many aspects of Indian life. Study of European arts and literature got importance in India. This was similar to the Renaissance that took place in Italy in 14th century.

1.2 Indian Writing in English

Indian Writing in English has a very recent history, which is one and half century old. Britishers ruled India for 150 years. India and England had dealt with each other in trade, military and political affairs. During this period, England acquired wealth and empire of India. India, in return, got English language and the concept of constitutional Government. From the historical perspective, Indian English Literature has passed through several phases such as Indo-Anglian, Indo-English, Indian Writing in English and recently Indian English literature. Inspite of its diverse cultures, races and religions Indian Writing in English has successfully recaptured and reflected the multi-cultural, multilingual society. As a result, it has aroused a good deal of interest at home and abroad also. The works of various writers get not only a vast category of readers, but also receive a vast critical acclaim.

The term Indian Writing in English is used in a wider sense. This is the body of works by the writers whose mother tongue is one of the languages of multilingual India. According to K. R. S. Iyengar, there are three types of Indian writers in
English, “First, those who have acquired their entire education in English schools and universities. Second, Indians who have settled abroad, but are constantly in touch with the changing surrounding and traditions of their country of adoption. And finally, Indians who have acquired English as a second language.” Consequently, a large number of Indians were greatly moved by the genuine desire to present before the western readers an authentic picture of India through their writings.

Many Indian writers have chosen English as a medium of expression and left a great impact on different forms of literature. For example Toru Dutt, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, Sri Aurobindo, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nissim Ezekiel, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Deshpande, and some recent Indian writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Arvind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat and many others. They have been using English to represent the Indian culture and spirit. In this connection, the remarks of Randolph Quirk and Raja Rao are worth quoting. Quirk rightly remarks that English is not the private property of the Englishmen. Similarly, Raja Rao says in the Preface of his novel Kanthapura:

“One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one’s own.”

One can notice ‘Indianness’ in Indian Writing in English. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has rightly commented in this regard:

“What makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian literature and not just a ramshackle outhouse of English literature is the quality of its ‘Indianness’ in the choice of its subjects, in the texture of thought
and play of sentiment, in the organization of material and in the
creative use of language."  

Whereas Meenakshi Mukherjee observes:

“Whatever be the language in which it is written, a novel by an
Indian writer demands direct involvement in values and
experiences which are valid in the Indian context.”

Indian Writing in English expresses a shared tradition, cultural experiences
and Indian heritage. Early Indian writers have used many Indian words and the
experiences throughout their works of art. R. K. Narayan has created Malgudi similar
to Thomas Hardy’s Wessex. Nirad C. Chudhary is famous for his The Autobiography
Bayapa P. these writers do comment on the social issues like: “superstitions, casteism,
poverty, illiteracy and many other social evils that were eating the vitals of Indian
society.”

Salman Rushdie is the most notable among all the Indian writers in English.
His Midnight’s Children (1980) won the Booker Prize in 1981. We know Shashi
Tharoor for his The Great Indian Novel (1989), Bharati Mukherjee author of Jasmine
(1989) has spent her career on the issues involving immigration and identity. Vikram
Seth is known for his novel A Suitable Boy (1994). Other remarkable writers include
Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Kirchner,
Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, C. R. Krishnan, Vikas Swarup, Chetan
Bhagat, Arvind Adiga and others. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is well known for her
unique literary creations like Arranged Marriage (1996), The Mistress of Spices
(2013) and others.
Indian Writing in English has witnessed few controversies in its evolvement. It has to prove itself on the grounds of superiority and inferiority compared to literature produced in other Indian languages. It has also witnessed accusations of being superficial, imitative, shallow etc. Indian writers in English have also been criticized of being not real socio-cultural ambassadors of India. They have been said to get themselves uprooted from the authentic Indian sense. However, the new generation of Indian writers in English has handled the wide range of themes and the subject matters. Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Chetan Bhagat, Arvind Adiga and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have written on variety of themes. For these writers English is a medium of expression of their creative urge, through which they can reach to the international readers.

1.2.1 Indian English Prose

The use of English for the exposition of Indian views has opened up new gateways of the interpretation of Indian scenario. Raja Ram Mohan Roy an advocate of English education was the first Indian to write prose in English. Mahatma Gandhi’s writing was marked by simplicity, pointedness, and clarity of thought, which are the essential attributes of a good prose. His The Story of My Experiments with Truth (1940) is a great work. Jawaharlal Nehru’s principal works include Glimpses of World History (1934), Autobiography: Towards Freedom (1936) and Discovery of India (1946). Dr. Radhakrishnan, a great writer and philosopher expressed philosophical thoughts. Swami Vivekananda’s speeches and writing spread over the volumes. Other legendary thinkers like Keshab Chunder Sen, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ravindranath Tagore and Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj have contributed for social, educational and religious reform through their works.
1.2.2 Indian English Poetry

The history of Indian English poetry began in 1830 with Kashiprasad Ghosh. However, Henry Derozio (1827) was considered the earliest Indian English poet. His *The Shair and Other Poems* (1830) found a place in literary history of India. Michal Madhusudhan Dutt’s (1824-1872) two long poems, *The Captive Lady* and *Vision of Past* (1849) are worth noting. Manmohan Ghose an elder brother of Sri. Aurobindo wrote his Love Songs and Elegies in 1898.

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) is the first Indian poetess in English. She wrote a good deal of poetry in which she has represented Indian traditions in a foreign language. She has to her credit *A Sheaf Gleamed in French Fields* (1880) a volume of French poetry that she translated into English. Sri. Aurobindo was a genius who worked on prose poetry and drama. His *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1995) is an epic in 12 books. It is about an individual who overcomes ignorance, suffering, and death in the world through her spiritual quest. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1940) the ‘Nightingale of India’ has been considered the most prominent poetess of the colonial period. Three volumes of her poetry, *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917) ranks her among the notable writers. This series is further carried on by Ravindranath Tagore a great poet, dramatist, novelist, a storyteller and famous educationalist. He has translated *Gitanjali* (1910), a collection of poems in Bengali, into English. Tagore has created ‘strong women’ in his works like *Ghare-Baire* (1916) but penetrated submissive behaviour for women in his prose writings.

The post-independence era is marked by country’s search of its own identity, which is reflected in poetry produced by the contemporary poets. Kamala Das has written confessional poetry. Her poetic output is contained in four volumes of poems.
that include *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) and *Stranger Time* (1975).


### 1.2.3 Indian English Drama

Indian English drama dates from 1831 when Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote *The Persecuted: or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta. The First Parsi Baronet*, perhaps the earliest Indian English verse play was written by C. S. Nazir in 1866. Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated three of his own Bengali plays into English i.e. *Ratnavali* (1858) *Sermista* (1859) and *Is This

Dharmvir Bharati, Badal Sirkar, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar are widely considered to be among the finest playwrights writing in Indian languages. They have experimented with remarkable innovations, techniques and themes.

1.3 Indian English Novel

Indians possess the gift of storytelling from the time of Rig-Veda and Upanishad. There was Thirty Two Tales of the Throne dealing with King Vikramaditya or Somadeva’s Kathasaritasager. In the beginning the translations of the western classics have appeared. Then translation took the form of adoption and summarization and finally the creation of the original works took place in the form of an imitation of the western models. K. S. Ramamurti says in this regard:

“The novel as a medium of story-telling and art form is essentially of the west and represents a tradition of fictional writing which is a totally different from India’s time honoured tradition of story-telling”?

Kailash Chander Dutt’s A Journey of 48 Hours of the Year of 1945 appeared in the Calcutta Literary Gazette on 6 June 1835 in which an imaginary but successful revolt against the Britishers was projected. Then appear S. C. Dutt’s Republic of
Orissa (1854). It describes the imaginary defeat of the Britishers and the establishment of democracy in Orissa.

In the nineteenth century, with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864) and Lal Behari Day’s *Govind Samanta* (1874), Indian novel in English grew rapidly in respect of thematic variety and linguistic maturity. It is assumed that Indian novel in English has its roots in nineteenth century realistic tradition of English novel. The impact of English education, national awakening and the influence of European models are the chief factors responsible for the rise and development of Indian novel in English. Indian novel in English has become thoroughly Indian in terms of themes, techniques and human values. In this regard Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that:

“The novel in India can be seen as the product of configurations in philosophical, aesthetic, economic and political forces in the larger life of the country. Despite obvious, regional variations, a basic pattern seems to emerge from shared factors like the Puranic heritage, hierarchical social structure, colonial education, disjunction of agrarian life and many others that affect the form of novel as well as its content.”

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) was the founder member of the modern school of Indian fiction. He was the first Indian to write a novel in English. He began with *Rajmohan’s Wife*. Later the nationalistic zeal forced him to write in his native language i.e. Bengali. Bankim Chandra’s work in Bengali are *Durgeshannadini* (1865), *Kapalkundala* (1866), *Vishbriksha* (1873), *Krishnakanter Uil* (1878), *Anandmath* (1882) and *Devi Chaundhurani* (1884) which almost all were translated into English.
Ravindranath Tagore’s *Choker Bali*, which was originally written in Bengali, was later translated into English in 1902. Tagore translated many of his works into English, which were originally composed in Bengali. R. C. Dutt has written six novels in Bengali; two of them were translated into English by himself. R. C. Dutt and Tagore influenced the early Indian English novelists. Anand Shankar Roy, the prominent Bengali novelist of this time says that during this period Indian English novel passed through three stages:

“When Bankim wrote, the chief question was how to restore the national self respect, in Rabindranath’s time it was how to bridge the East and the west. In Sarat Chandra it was how to identify ourselves with the common people.”

The time between 1930 and 1965 was a flowering period of the novel form. Three pillars of Indian novels in English Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao the Big-Three contributed in this period. The credit of fame and reputation to Indian fiction in English goes to them. It was during this period that Indian fiction in English discovered its most significant themes, such as struggle for freedom, East-West encounter, communal problem, plight of poor and untouchables, plight of women and landless poor etc.

Indian fiction in English has heavily laid emphasis on Indian themes. It has expressed the joys and sorrows of Indian people. Realism has always been one of the unique features of Anand’s writing. His major characters are all life like and they are very close to reality. Hilla Vakeel observes:

“Anand has a most uncanny gift for evoking vivid and significant details and projecting them from brilliant, life-like images of human beings.”
Mulk Raj Anand brought humanism in Indian English fiction by employing the method of storytelling. His novels *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *Village* (1939) and *Across the Black Waters* (1940) have dealt with the problems of hunger and poverty, untouchability, economic exploitation and class distinction.

R. K. Narayan is classified as a novelist of Indian middle class who possesses the comic view of life. After his first episodic novel *Swami and His Friends* (1935), he made significant experiments with the technique in his later novels. Such as *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1949) and *The Painter of Signs* (1976). Narayan has used local colour and setting and has created a small imaginary world of Malgudi in his novels.


After this big trio, the remarkable novelists in the tradition of Indian English fiction are Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh, R.P. Jhabwala, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Chaman Nahal, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Chetan Bhagat, Arvind Adiga and many others.

All these writers have preferred to write about real India. They have preferred to express its terrible poverty, agricultural tradition, its religion, and caste system. Indian customs and traditions are expressed through their writing. Dr. A. V. Krishna Rao rightly remarks about the novel of post-independence era:
“The post-independence novel clearly marks out a new phase of emotional and intellectual growth in Indian literature. The dislocation, the distemper and disenchantment of the post war and the post-independence have had their impact on the Indo-Anglian novel too.”

Before independence Indian writers were forced by the situation of the country to write about the nationalistic zeal. That is why they preferred to write about the struggle for freedom and the cruelty of the Britishers. However, after independence all the writers were free from that bondage so that they started writing about the various issues. Writers started mentioning the important political events, partition of India and its terrible consequences, merging of the states into Indian union, wars with Pakistan and China found place in the fiction of the writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie and Chaman Nahal.

New trend is clearly visible after independence as the subject matters changed like communal conflicts, miseries of lower classes, meaninglessness of existence and alienation of an individual. The novel before independence was mainly interested in social, political and historical concerns; whereas the novel in post independent India seems to be interested in contemporary issues. The psychological novel describing the human personality and inner realities of life replaced the realistic novel. The novels written in the post-Independence period successfully render this Indian reality. A number of novelists like Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Shobha De, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have explored the psychological and sociological conflicts in the social and the individual’s life. There is a kind of shift from socio-political concerns to the inner life of human being. The modern Indian writers wrote about the sociocultural predicament of the modern man. Many modern novels have
dealt with man’s alienation from his self, his class, his society and humanity at large. In other words, the centre of their novels shifted from society to an individual. C. Paul Verghese’s comment in this regard is worth quoting:

“Most of the novelists in their eagerness to find new themes ‘renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man’ and continued ‘a search for the essence of human living’. It is this trend that continued in the seventies and it also shaped the novels of the eighties.”

The novels of the 1970 laid foundation for the revolution in the fictional technique and sensibility in the novels of 1980s. The publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) is considered as the sensational event in the literary history. *The Golden Gate* (1986) by Vikram Seth is another miracle by an Indian author. Other remarkable writers of the 1980s are Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry.

Unlike 1930s and 50s last decades of the nineteenth century have marked the significant development and growth of the Indian novel in English. During this period, some very promising Indian novelists and their novels have emerged on a literary scene. The novels of this period delineated private tension, self-alienation and loneliness. Anita Desai described the disturbed lives of the middle class. Shashi Deshpande described the personal domestic life of women. Arun Joshi focused different faces of alienation in his novels like *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971).

Two most important and remarkable events which happened at the dawn of 21st century are: Jhumpa Lahiri was awarded Pulitzer Prize for her work *Interpreter of Maladies* in 2000 and V. S. Naipaul was honoured with Nobel Prize for literature in
Indian novelists have used the language which is not their own. They have used English language to spread the message. This language certainly has provided them an opportunity to reach all over the world and to make sure that they do not remain confined to their region, to their people and to their country. Some of the writers who have given a “new tone, tenor and content to Indian fiction in English, include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Allan J. Sealy, Geeta Mehta and Arundhati Roy…. "14 The contribution of others like Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, Rohinton Mistry, V. S. Naipaul, Farrukh Dhondy, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Shashi Tharoor, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chetan Bhagat, Arvind Adiga, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and others is praiseworthy. In their hands, the Indian English novel has made tremendous progress.

1.4 The Contribution of Women Novelists in the Development of the Indian English Novel

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its woman.”15

The progress of the nation is measured on the basis of woman’s status in it. It is a truth that a woman of any nation is a mirror to its civilization. If a woman of the nation enjoys good status, it is a symbol that shows that the nation has reached a level of maturity and a sense of responsibility. India has a patriarchal society where woman is defined not as herself but as relative to man. Woman is never regarded as an individual, but always as subordinate to man. The condition of woman has always been inferior to their male counterpart. The fact is ignored that she has contributed for the betterment of her family, for her society, sometimes for her village, state or for her country. Thus she does well to all humanity. According to Holy Bible, man is the most supreme power and woman was generated out of man. It says:
“Therefore, God created Eve for man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.”

In Manu-Smriti, women are often compared with shudras and slaves. But, in modern times woman has achieved the important position in Indian society and is doing well in all the sectors of life to which writing is not an exception.

In the galaxy of Indian novelists in English, Indian women novelists too shine luminously along with their male counterparts. We have a list of women writers of the past that possess a skill of storytelling. They are very good at story telling. The stories told by mothers and grandmothers were transformed into prose, poetry, novel or drama. The amount of Indian writing in English by women is definitely less than the writing by women in their regional languages. The last few decades show remarkable development in Indian women’s writing in English. Indian women novelists constitute a significant group. Women novelists prefer to write about child marriage, protest against polygamy system and widowhood in the earlier days.

1.4.1 Pre-Independence Women Novelists

The Indian novel in English before independence was male dominated. Very few women novelists emerged in this era. The first generation of the women novelists describe the traditional women. Toru Dutt (1856-1877) has dealt with the archetypes of women like Sita, Savitri and Draupadi. Raj Laxmi Debi in her two novels The Hindu Wife and The Enchanted Fruit (1876) has revolted against the existing social conditions. Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858-1922) has written a book about high caste Indian (Hindu) women. She expressed her views about the marriage system and commented on how women remain satisfied in their relationship with their husbands and how they were happy to be in the bondages. Swarna Kumari Ghoshal (1856-
1932), the elder sister of Ravindranath Tagore, was a poet, novelist, playwright, storywriter and a journalist. Her major works include *The Fatal Garland*, (1910) *The Unfinished Song*, (1913) and *An Indian Love Story* (1910). Her works proved to be the torchbearer in the tradition of women writing in Bengal and showed the quality of woman’s writing.

Women characters in most of the early novels are typical traditional Indian women. These women hold their concern with the traditional feminine qualities of faithfulness, sincerity and love. All these writers wrote about the contemporary social situations. They have written about what they have suffered. Their real aim was to exhibit and explore the real status of women in Indian society.

Krupabai Sathianandan wrote during 1862 to 1894. She was one of the few Indian women writers who wrote in English. Sathianandan began to write when she came to know that she had very few days to live, as she was diagnosed with tuberculoses. She began to work on *Kamala* and continued writing until her death. *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* was first published serially in the Madras Christian College Magazine in 1894 and was published as a book posthumously in the same year. The Indian as well as the foreign readers very well received *kamala*. It was translated into Tamil in 1896 and the original title *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* changed slightly to *Kamala, the Story of a Hindu Child Wife*. Her other work is *Saguna–A Study of Native Christian Life* (1895).

The next prominent figure in the series is Swarna Kumari Debi, the fourth daughter of Debendranath Tagore who was married at the age of thirteen under the Bramho marriage rights. She composed poetry and fiction. Her first novel *Deepnirban* (1876) was published when Swarna Kumari was only eighteen years old. She wrote 25 books in Bengali, which include plays, short stories and novels. Two of her novels
Chhinnamukul (1879) and Phuler-Mala were translated into English in 1910 and in 1913 respectively. Swarna Kumari was one of the first two delegates elected from Bengal to represent the state at the 1890 Congress session. In 1927, she was awarded the Jagattarini Gold Medal by University of Calcutta and she became the president of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan in 1929.

Cornelia Sorabji ventured on the literary map during 1866 to 1954. She was the first woman barrister from India. Sorabji was born on 15 November 1866, at Nasik, the city of grapes in India. In addition to her works as a social reformer and a legal activist, she wrote a number of books, short stories and articles. Her books include Love and Life Behind the Purdha (1902). It is about the quarrels of women in their domestic quarters called Zanana. Sun-Babies: A Study in the Child-Life of India (1904) is a study of child life in India. Her other works are The Purdhanashin (1917), Therefore (1924), Gold Mohur1930), and A Biography of her Educationalist Sister Susie Sorabji (1932). She also wrote India Calling (1934) and India Recalled (1936).

Last but not least, Roquia Sakhawat Hussain (1880-1932) a prolific writer and social worker in undivided Bengal in the early 20th century. She was known for her efforts on gender equality and other social issues. She established a school for Muslim girls, which still exists. She was a notable Muslim feminist born as Roquia Khatun but at the age of 18 married to her Urdu speaking husband Khan Bahadur Sakhawat Hussain. She changed her name as Rokeya when she started writing in English. Her writing includes Sultan's Dream (1905), Motichur, Paddorag and Nair Adhikar an essay for the Islamic women’s association.

1.4.2 Post-independence Women Novelists

During the period of 1915 to 1950 no remarkable women writer appeared on the literary map. Then, Venu Chitale produced her Intransit in 1950. Zeenath
Futchally’s Zohra appeared in 1955 in which the Muslim life, culture and manners are presented. Shakuntala Shringesh produced The Little Black Box in 1965.

Some of the significant women writers in the post-independence era are Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and others. Kamala Markandaya has presented women in a traditional outlook and independent in thinking. R.P. Jhabwala has found that life in India is a burden to a European woman, while Santha Rama Rao has believed in the superiority of the Indian culture when it came across the western culture. Nayantara Sahgal presented the problems of women when injustice is done to a woman in marriage. Raji Narasimhan presented liberated women characters in her novels. Her women characters are educated and able to live freely. Her works include The Heart of Standing is You Cannot Fly (1973), Forever Free (1979) and The Sky Changes (1910).

Anita Desai is different from other women novelists, as she has presented psychological exploitation of her women characters. Her protagonists are mainly lonely and sensitive. Shashi Deshpande, a graduate in economics and law studies, focused on the problems and issues of contemporary middle class women. Her protagonists are sensitive, intelligent and career oriented. Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian-American immigrant writer, wrote about her experiences in India as well as in America and Canada. Her protagonists are victims of racism, sexism and other forms of social evil.


Nayantara Sahgal is one of the first few Indian women writers who immediately caught attention of the literary world. Sahgal belongs to one of the most prominent political families of India i.e. Nehru Gandhi family. She was always in touch with the aristocratic people. Hence, most of her characters belong to the wealthy and upper class Indian society. She sticks to the people she knew intimately. All of her characters are able to think in English and talk in English; they never had a problem to present Indian conversation into English. Politics was in her blood, so one of the important political events from India forms the background of her each novel. *A Time to be Happy* (1963) presents the dawn of Indian independence. *This Time of Morning* (1965) is about few days after independence. *Strom in Chandigarh* (1969) deals with partition of Punjab. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1983) presents the political situation of the Indian capital when the question of leadership after Nehru occurred. Some of her characters are the easily recognizable public figures, for example, Kailash Sinha means Krishna Menon in *This Time of Morning*. Shivraj in *A Situation in New Delhi* means Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Day in Shadow* (1971) is an outstanding novel by Nayantara Sahgal. Its protagonist, Smirit Raman is a writer who prefers divorce when she found futility of companionship between husband and wife. However, it is ironical that after getting separated from her husband she did not start
her own life. On the contrary, she preferred to depend on other man, Raj, a parliament member. The novel shows the prejudice she has to face in this male dominated society. Sahgal has expressed her deep nationalistic feelings in her earlier works, but later her personal life and the bitter marital experiences compel her to reflect them in her novels. Sahgal has shown a realistic picture of high-level politicians and beurocrats. She has shown how politicians care for themselves instead of the problems of common people. Because of her birth and her upbringing, Sahgal sometimes thinks, she does not entirely belong to India.

Her novel, Rich Like Us (1985) won the Sinclair Prize for fiction in the year 1985. Sahgal in her novels has presented the India of the early decades of this century. Her searching looks at India during emergency reveals that here democracy and spirituality is only skin-deep. It was her deep concern with the country that leads her to say about emergency imposed on India by her cousin Mrs Indira Gandhi. Sahgal has written when many writers have preferred to keep silence on the issue because of the power and dominance of Indira Gandhi. Women created by her possess independent nature. It is also worth to be noticed that feminine attitude of Sahgal “is closer to writers like Simon de Beauvoir and much lesser writers like Betty Friedan and Katy Millet”.

Another notable literary figure in Indian women’s writing in English is Anita Desai. According to Anita Desai, writing is a process of “exploration of language: how much can language do, how far can it pretend human experience and feelings.”

Anita Desai published her first novel Cry the Peacock in 1963. It was followed by, Fire on the Mountain (1977), Games at Twilight (1978), Clear Light of Day (1980), The Village by the Sea (1982), In Custody (1984), Baumgartner’s Bombay

Fire on a Mountain is about three women and their complex experiences in life. In Clear Light of Day, Desai mixed the history of Delhi with the middle class Hindu family. In Where Shall We Go This Summer (1975), Sita, the protagonist pregnant with her fifth child, takes refuge on the magical island. During the years of mid 80s, Desai look more closely towards the life of the unprivileged. In Custody is an ironic story about literary tradition and academic illusions. The central characters are Nur, an Urdu poet, who is in his decaying days and Deven, a professor of Hindi, who realizes that the beloved poet is not the magical genius he imagined. In Journey to Ithaca (1995), Desai examined the nature of pilgrimage to India. Fasting Feasting shows the contrast of American and Indian culture as well as male and female.

Anita Desai is remarkable for sensitive portrayal of inner life of her female characters. Many of Desai’s novels explore tensions of alienated middle class women. Most of Anita Desai’s characters are drawn from the Indian middle class families. Her characters often adapt the escapist ways to cope with everyday life. Their marital problems are mainly focused throughout her works of art. Desai confesses that she feels India as an Indian. But she thinks about it as an outsider. So her fiction moves around the themes such as women’s oppression, quest for identity, family relationships, the breakdown of traditions and social biases. Dr. Pal has rightly observed Desai as an “obsessive existentialist”

Next prolific woman writer is Bharati Mukherjee. She was born on July 27, 1940 to wealthy parents. In 1947, her family moved to Britain and lived there for three and half years. At the age of ten, Mukherjee realized that she wanted to become a writer and wrote a number of short stories.
Mukherjee mainly concentrated on migration, the status of new immigrants and a feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates. She has written about Indian women and their struggle. Mukherjee herself has the first-hand experience as an immigrant. Her own immigrant experiences and struggle for identity in Canada or in America have led her to write about the issues of immigrants. She admits:

“The experience of cutting myself off from a biological homeland and settling in an adopted homeland that is not always welcoming to its dark complexioned citizens has tested me as a person, and made me the writer I am today.”

*The Tiger’s Daughter* (1971) is a story of a young girl Tara, who goes back to India after many years. This is identical to Mukherjee’s own venture back to India with her husband Cleark Blaise in 1973 when she had bad experiences of poverty and mistreatment of women under the name of tradition. Her husband was awful to see the myth and the culture that had surrounded every part of Bengal. Her experiences with her husband are expressed in their joint publication, *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977).

The second phase of her writing contains the works *Wife* (1975), the collection of short stories, *Darkness* (1985), an essay *An Invisible Woman* and *The Sorrow and The Terror* (1987) which is in collaboration with Cleark Blaise. These works express Mukherjee’s own experiences of racism in Canada, where she gets ill-treatment irrespective of being a professor. A short story entitled *Isolated Incidents* explores the biased Canadian view towards the immigrants she encountered. Another short story *The Tenant* reflects her views on immigrant Indian women studying in America and her experiences of racism. *Wife* is a story of Dimple who aspires for freedom and love in marriage. However, out of fear she murders her husband and commits suicide. The
stories included in Darkness are all about immigrant women. The Middle Man and Other Stories (1988) is a collection of short stories that brought her the National Book Critics Circle Award for Best Fiction. These stories explore the meeting of East and West through immigrant experiences in America and Canada.

The Holder of The World (1913), Leave it to Me (1997), Desirable Daughters (2002), The Tree Bride (2004) and Miss New India (2011) are her latest works. The Holder of the World is a beautifully written story of Hannah Easton, a woman born in Massachusetts, who travels to India. Leave it to Me is the story of a young woman named Debby Dimartiono who seeks revenge on her parents who had abandoned her. The novel also expresses the conflict between East and West. It also explores the mother-daughter relationship. In The Tree Bride, the narrator Tara Banerjee picks up the story of an East Bengali ancestor.

Shashi Deshpande was born in Dharwad, a small town in the state of Karnataka in southern India. Like other Indian writers, she is committed to social cause and responsibility. Her novels are women oriented. In all her stories and novels she represented real India. Women deprived of love, understanding and companionship are at the centre of her works. She shows how the traditional Indian society is biased against women. She believes that men and women write differently. About the beginning of That Long Silence (1989) she says “… I somehow feel that anybody who reads this, would know this is a woman writing.”

Her first work The Legacy is a collection of short stories and since then she had published dozens of stories. Her short story A Liberated Woman is about a young woman who falls in love with a man of different caste and marries him by going against her parents. Then, she becomes a successful doctor, but her success breaks her marriage. Deshpande’s first novel The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980) grows out of
her short story *A Liberated Woman*. In it Sarita, the protagonist, defies her mother and becomes a doctor. She defies caste system and caste restrictions by marrying a man she loves. Her marriage also proves to be a failure and Sarita goes to her parents’ home, but very soon realizes that her patients and her children need her.

*If I Die Today* (1982) contains the elements of detective fiction. *Roots and Shadows* (1993) describe the breakup of a joint family held together by the money and authority of an old aunt. Deshpande’s fifth novel, *That Long Silence* is (1998) her best work. In this novel Jaya belongs to an upper middle class. She is a homemaker and a mother of two teenage children. She is forced to take stock of her life when her husband is suspected of fraud. They gave up their luxurious house and moved to a small flat in a poor locality of Bombay. The novel reveals the hollowness of modern Indian life, where success is seen as a convenient arranged marriage with a wealthy husband, with children studying at good schools. Deshpande strongly feels about the ill-treatment girl children get in India. *A Matter of Time* (1996) is a tale of a woman abandoned by a man.

Arundhati Roy was born on 24th of November 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya. She is a child of a Christian mother and a Bengali father. Roy worked at various jobs until her novel, *The God of Small Things* (1992) made her financially stable. She has written a screenplay *In Which Annie Gives it Those One’s* (1989). Roy catches the attention when she criticized Shekhar Kapur’s film Bandit Queen based on the life of Phoolan Devi. Roy possesses a good deal of social structure as well as political background which she expresses through her writing. Nila Shah comments:

“Roy’s work undoubtedly deconstructs the hidden ideology of patriarchal society that moulds a woman making a frontal attack on
long-revered traditional assumption about women. It questions and
disturbs the hegemony and social hierarchy.”

Roy begins writing with The God of Small Things in 1992, which brought her
the Booker Prize (1997). It is a story of a childhood experience of fraternal twins who
become the victims of circumstance. The novel tells how the small things in life built
up, translate into people’s behaviour and affect their lives. The story primarily takes
place in a town named Aymanam, now a part of Kottayam in Kerala, the State of
India. The time span is from 1969, when Rahel and Estha the twins were seven years
old, to 1993 when they were reunited at the age of 31. The novel mainly captures the
aspects of Keralite life such as communion, caste system and the Keralite christen
way of life.

The Algebra of Infinite Justice (2001) is a collection of essays written by Roy
that discusses several perspectives of global and local concerns. It focuses on several
issues from the fields like politics, law, and the politics of some power-deprived
nations. Roy was awarded Sahitya Academy Award in Jan 2006. Her views against
India’s nuclear weaponisation are expressed through her writings in response to
India’s testing of nuclear weapons in Pokhran, Rajasthan. She wrote End of

Jhumpa Lahiri is an American author of Bengali descent. Her family moved to
America when she was three years old. Her characters are often Indian immigrants to
America who are torn between two worlds; two cultural values that of their homeland
and the new adapted one. Lahiri’s writing has autobiographical tone. It is based either
on her first hand experiences or on the experiences of her community people like her
parents, friends, neighbours or acquaintances. She has preferred to write about the
struggles, anxieties and biases. She has carefully written about the immigrant
psychology and behaviour. Lahiri has written about immigrant parents who struggle to keep their children acquainted with Indian culture and tradition. She has shown how parents struggle to keep their children attached to them even after they have grown up.

During her six years at Boston University, Lahiri wrote short stories and nine of them were collected in *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). These stories deal with the sensitive dilemmas in the lives of the Indian immigrants and have themes like marital difficulties and disconnection between immigrated parents and their children. American critics praised the collection, but it received mixed reviews in India because here few think that it is possible to present India in a much more positive manner. Lahiri herself said about this collection: “India is an inescapable presence in this strong first collection’s nine polished and resonant tales.”

Lahiri published her first novel *The Namesake* in the year 2003. It covers a period of more than thirty years of Ganguli’s family. Calcutta born parents immigrated to America as young adults and their children Gogal and Sonia grew up there while experiencing a generation gap as well as the cultural gap between them and their parents. Mira Nair directed a film on *The Namesake* in March 2007.

Lahiri’s second collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* was published in April 2008. It shows how people cope with each other. The title story *Unaccustomed Earth* is about the father of Rama and Rumi who is retired from his pharmaceutical company after his wife’s death due to a reaction to anaesthesia. Other stories included are *Hell-Heaven, A Choice of Accommodation, Only Goodness Nobody’s Business* and *Hema and Kaushik*.

Thus, majority of the Indian women writers in English have preferred to describe the trauma and troubles of the lives of Indian women, either in India or in
their newly adopted land. Indian women writers in English in the recent past have written on the theme of immigration more strikingly. The highly talented Indian women, writing fiction in English, began to receive considerable critical acclaim in the recent past. Padma Rangaswamy’s comment in this regard is worth quoting:

“The post-1965 Indian immigrant women are a different breed altogether...as articulate and organized professionals, they have expressed themselves in literature and recorded their immigrant experiences for posterity. Still, they have not received their fair share of focused attention...even though they represent half of the immigrant population.”

Every Indian woman writer, major or minor, has contributed more or less to the development of Indian fiction in English. The women portrayed by them are of real flesh and blood. Indian women’s relationships with their husbands and their relationships within and outside their family are neatly projected. The writer like Shobha De is away from the traditional beaten path. She made certain serious comments on the man woman relationship while writing about the urban woman.

The Indian women novelists do not only talk about glorious cultural past, traditions and customs; but they have dealt with changing domestic and social problems of women with changing scenario of society. Some talented women writers pull out the Indian reader out of their shells engulfed by gender issues. They have written about the complex issues like sensuality, servility and society. It is possible to view a different world through the eyes of these women writers. If the male writers have written about the problems of the individuals, social, economical and political issues through their works of art, women writers have preferred to write about women’s oppression, issues of power, deprivation of their rights, the injustice done to
them and their marginalization. Fiction by women writers really constitutes a major segment of contemporary Indian writing in English. Indian women novelists have focused on the issues of women and attempt to project the realistic picture of the life of woman as a core element of their literary works. The emotional world of woman is explored with the help of keen insight and frank expression. With their first-hand knowledge and fine understanding of status of woman in India, Indian women writers have projected the dilemma which modern Indian women face in their everyday life.

1.5 The Concepts- Diaspora, Expatriate and Immigrant

The term ‘Diaspora’ originally referred to scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. It implies any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland, especially involuntarily. In the recent years ‘diaspora’ refers not only to a group of people, but also to some aspects of their culture. Diasporic literature is a vast concept. It encompasses all literary works written by authors, who have settled outside their native country but are related to native culture and background. In this context all those writers can be considered as diasporic writers, who have settled abroad but remained attached to the homeland.

‘Expatriate ‘means someone living in a foreign land. It particularly means professionals sent abroad by their companies or governments. Sometimes confusion occurs between the terms expatriate and immigrant. An immigrant is a person who comes to a country with an intention to settle there permanently. The main difference between expatriate and immigrant is that, immigrant implies the sense of permanence, but expatriate does not have the connotation of a permanent move. An expatriate feels closer to the past and focuses on the native country that has been left behind. Whereas an immigrant celebrates his present in the new country and tries to be assimilated into it. Expatriate writing refers to the literary works of the expatriates, who are distanced
from their homeland. An expatriate writer concentrates on the ethnic identity when he undergoes the trauma of rejection in an alien culture, while, diasporic or immigrant writer focuses on Puranic themes, historical backgrounds, and socio-political life of the people of his homeland.

The history of removal either compulsory or voluntary, from the place of origin, is as old as human history. The act of moving from one place to another is called migration. Like birds and animals, human beings also migrate. However, people do not migrate all the time from their native place forever. Sometimes they migrate from their native place for a few days, for a few months and sometimes for some years. A person who migrates for a few days usually called a tourist. However, when people migrate to other places with an intention to live there permanently is called immigration. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration defined immigration as:

“Immigration is the introduction of new people into a habitat or population. It is a biological concept and is important in population ecology, differentiated from emigration and migration.”26

Another definition of immigration by wiktionary.org/wiki/immigration is as:

“The act of immigrating; the passing or coming into a country for the purpose of permanent residence.”27

Migration is particularly the concept that emerged in the second half of the 20th century. The world has become a global village due to the advancement of science and technology. In the very recent future, because of the advancement of science and technology and because of the modern man’s tendency of travelling, the whole universe is going to merge into itself. The world has come so close and the concepts like global village or universal brotherhood, i.e. ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam’
or ‘Vishwa Ek Nidam’\textsuperscript{28} i.e. the whole universe is a single nest are emerging. The boundaries are being dissolved and the future requires a single boundriless globe.

There are various reasons for migration. The reasons may be social, economical, political, or it may be educational or something else. However, displacement or dislocation often leads to a sense of nowhereness and identity crisis. The effects of immigration are harsher upon the immigrants than the society into which they enter. Immigration is a global phenomenon and an important aspect of literature. In the contemporary literary scene: “biculturalism has become more than a theme: it has become a mode of perception.”\textsuperscript{29}

1.6 Feminine Experience in Literature

The word feminism refers to social, political, cultural and economic movements, which intend to protect women’s rights, and intends to provide legal protection to women. It is based on some of the sociological, political and philosophical theories, which aspire and advocate empowerment of women. Feminism is a movement influenced by the ideas maintained, asserted, popularized and precipitated by thinkers and authors like Alice Walker, Naomi Littlebear, Judith Felterbey, Michele Wallace, Lillian Smith, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and others. It is a modern movement expressing protest against the dominance of men and the marginalization of women. It provides strategies for positive social change. The aim of feminist is to understand women’s oppression keeping in mind her race, gender, class and sexual preference. Simone de Beauvoir feels that:

“The situation of woman is that she is a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other.”\textsuperscript{30}
Thus, feminism is a social movement that advocates empowerment of women. This movement not only criticizes the injustice done to women in the past, but also expects a good present and better future for woman. In general, feminism criticizes the gender inequality. However, to be more specific, it demands the promotion of woman’s rights and their interests by questioning about the issues like sexual harassment, her relationships with others in society and her place in social, financial and political sectors of life.

Men initiated the movement of Indian feminism and later on women joined it. The men who started working for the betterment of women include the British officers as well as the Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule, Rajashri Shau Maharaj and others. The efforts of these men include their protest against the bad customs and traditions like sati, child marriage, ban on the remarriages of the widows, ban on woman’s education and their fight for the rights of women.

It is possible to divide the history of Indian feminism into three phases. The first phase is the British officers’ expression against the social evils in Indian society. The second phase is from 1915 to the dawn of Indian independence. In this period, Gandhi incorporated women’s movements into the ‘Quit India Movement’ and independent women’s organizations began to emerge. The third and final phase falls in the post-independent period, which has focused on fair treatment for women and their rights in all the sectors of life. In the post independent India, awareness is generated in woman’s status and her rights. The social evils like Sati, ill treatment to widows, the ban on widow remarriage, polygamy, child marriage, denial of property rights and denial of education to women have attracted the attention of the social reformers of the 19th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar,
Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Ravindranath Tagore, K. C. Sen, Mahatma Phule, Dayanand Saraswati and others from all parts of the country raised their voice against some of these unjust practices.

Many great writers have reflected the immigrant experience through their literary works. Since the beginning of the feminist movement in 1960s in the West, much has been written on women. Writers have contributed to the women’s movement by writing against their oppression, subordination and marginalization. Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Marilyn French and Margaret Atwood have contributed greatly to the movement and have been internationally acclaimed as Feminist novelists. They have announced a rise of a new wave of feminism across the world. Their influence on India resulted in a new breed of Indian feminists. The prominent Indian feminist novelists are R. P. Jhabwala, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, Kiran Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. These gifted women have occupied a prestigious position in Indian English fiction. The assertion of identity in their writings deserves a better treatment at the hands of their male counterpart. They protested against the cruelty perpetrated on the women by portraying their responses and reactions. The spirit of revolt against mechanical life, mismatched marriages and wayward ways of their life partners was obvious in their writings. The protagonists of their novels are troubled and suppressed women of a typical Indian society. Many Post-modern Indian writers have dealt with the theme of immigrant feminine experience from its different perspectives.

A group of woman writers of Indian origin involves itself into female issues and it is continuously trying to explore the troubled lives of immigrant women in different parts of the world. The writers of the 1970s expressed the cruel injustice...
done to women in the male dominated India. The women writers of the 21st century have gone beyond the fight for the inequality. These writers prefer to write about the desire of women to be free and independent. The migrated people have given birth to hybrid-culture. This is a mixture of the culture of their biological home and that of their newly adopted home. Bill Ashcroft and his colleagues observe:

“Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and ‘peripheral’ subversions of them.”

The writers who by birth are Indian but living out of India at present are called immigrant writers. Many of the Indian immigrant writers have written on the theme of immigration from feminine standpoint. These writers have the first-hand experience of being immigrant. They knew Indian culture as well as the culture of their newly adopted country and status of woman in both cultures. They expressed what they have experienced as immigrants. Indian immigrant writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and rest have continuously dealt with immigrant feminine experience through their works. Bharati Mukherjee has written about the status of immigrants in America. *Darkness* by Bharati Mukherjee is perhaps an allusion to the racism in Canada. These short stories describe the despair produced by the encounter with Canadian racism. In *Jasmine*, (1975) she shows the possibilities of remaking oneself in the new world as Jasmine reinvents herself by killing her old self, she says:
“There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams.”

Jhumpa Lahiri’s short stories present a remarkable picture of the lives of the people who go through the harsh journey of becoming American. In the title story of the Pulitzer Prize winning Interpreter of Maladies, (1999) Das family returns to India from America and is forced to recognize their dual identity, American in clothing, speech, and body language, but Indian by heart.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s short story, Clothes, the husband of the narrator Sumita dies and she has to decide whether to stay in America or to go back to India. In Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs, the female protagonist is a graduate student newly arrived in America. She considers America as a land of illusion, but has to face the harsh reality when she is assaulted on wide Chicago streets. In Doors, the character Preeti falls in love with western idea of privacy after moving to America. Ultrasound is another short story that deals with the issue of female foeticide. According to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, immigrants read their works because they are writing about their present status as an immigrant. It represents the realistic picture of their lives from the feminine perspective as every writer’s sweat and blood is there in his or her writing. Native Americans would read their works because they are curious about the foreigners living in the middle of them.

The quest for identity, cultural conflicts, impact of industrialization and the consequent social and economic changes, the problem of the expatriates and immigrants and the relationships formed by the immigrants are some of the common themes that are dealt by Indian women writers. They have presented the dilemma of modern women facing in recent times. The novelists have used their skills in
projecting convincingly the troubled status of the suffered women. The portrayal of immigrant women in their literary works bears authenticity to their feminist approach, outlook and perspective. Their keen observations of the life of Indian women and their interest in the study of their inner psyche have helped Indian women novelists to portray their plight and exploitation concretely. These writers dive deep into the inner lives of the marginalized women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and have brought to light their issues that are the outcome of their psychological and emotional imbalances.

1.7 Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a Bengali woman, belongs to post-independent group of Indian writers who have been writing in English. Divakaruni has established herself as a distinct, talented and extraordinary South Asian women writer. She is one of those writers who have spent much of their life outside India, in one of the western countries. Some part of her writing is autobiographical in nature as it deals with her personal experiences in India and America. Her works primarily deal with the experiences of the immigrant women from the feminine standpoint.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in Calcutta on 29th July 1956. She grew up in New Alipore in Calcutta, and spent the first nineteen years of her life in India. Her father Rajendra Kumar Banerjee was an accountant by profession and her mother Tatini Banerjee was a schoolteacher. Chitra was the only girl child among the four children. She was the second child to them and the other three brothers were Partha, Dhrurva and Surya.

Divakaruni studied at Loreto House, a convent school run by Irish nuns. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English from Presidency College, University of Calcutta in 1976 and in the same year, she left Calcutta and moved to America. She
completed her Master degree in English from the Wright State University in Dayton Ohio in the year 1978, where she moved at the age of nineteen in order to continue higher education. She lived in Chicago and Ohio before she settled in Sunnydale, California in 1979, which she says: “definitely is the best part of the country and is most cosmopolitan and the most multicultural.”\textsuperscript{34} She received Ph. D. in English from the University of California at Berkeley working under Stephen Greenbalt on the topic “For Danger is in Words: A Study of Language in Marlowe’s Plays” in 1984. Divakaruni tried different jobs to pay for her education. It includes babysitting, selling merchandise in an Indian boutique, slicing bread at bakery and washing instruments at science lab, etc. During her stay in America she realized that: “there were hundreds of fellow expatriate women who were trapped in abusive marriages or relationships or who did not know how to cope with the more free-wheeling western society.”\textsuperscript{35}

Divakaruni is interested in the issues involving women. She works with Afghani women refugees and troubled Indian women in America. She became the founder member and president of the organization MAITRI in 1991. MAITRI is an organization in the San Francisco that works for South Asian women in worse conditions. It helps South Asian women facing domestic violence, emotional abuse and cultural alienation. It works with some other social organizations to raise awareness against domestic violence. Divakaruni’s attachment with the organizations like MAITRI has influenced her writing. The women she came across while working with these organizations find their expressions in her literary works. She admits:

“\textit{It is their hidden stories that I try to tell in many of my talks….It is their courage and humanity that I celebrate and honour.}”\textsuperscript{36}

Divakaruni also serves on the advisory board of Daya; A Huston based non-profit organization that works to prevent violence against women. It helps to
strengthen and promote healthy family relationship within the South Asian community. She also works for PRATHAM, a worldwide non-profit organization, dedicated to removing illiteracy in India. PRATHAM mainly works in urban slums, rural outposts, and prison’s labour sites where children are being employed. Its mission is: “Every Child in School and Learning Well.” Divakaruni’s attachment with these social organizations has influenced her writing. She admits:

“The work I did definitely influenced my writing … It made me think a lot more about the issues I was seeing and how it related to the lives of immigrants, and I wanted to write about it.”

Her interest in women began after she left India, at which point she came to re-evaluate the treatment of women there. With the purpose of uniting people, she blends together myth, mystery and the everyday reality of life. Much of her writing moves around the immigrant feminine experience. She admits:

“Women in particular respond to my work because I’m writing about them, women in love, in difficulty, women in relationships. I want people to relate to my characters, to feel their joy and pain, because it will be harder to [be] prejudiced when they meet them in real life.”

Divakaruni was a well-received poet before she established herself as a novelist. She has written poems based on the variety of themes. She has four volumes of poetry to her credit. Leaving Yuba City (1997) is Divakaruni’s fourth volume of poetry. Other three are Dark like the River, (1987) The Reason for Nasturtiums (1990), and Black Candle (1991). The core area of interest remains the immigrant women and their troubled lives in her poetry also.
Divakaruni has published in more than fifty magazines which include Atlantic Monthly and New Yorker. Her writing has been included in several Asian American anthologies such as Best American Short Stories and The Pushcart Prize Anthology. Her works have been translated into eleven languages including Dutch, Hebrew, Portuguese, Danish, German and Japanese.


Year award by University of California at Berkeley (2008), South Asian Literary Association Distinguished Author Award (2007).

Divakaruni has judged several prestigious awards such as National Book Award and the PEN Faulkner Award. Two of her books, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, have been adopted into movies by filmmakers Gurinder Chaddha and Paul Berges (an English film) and *Suhasini Mani Ratnam* (a Tamil TV serial) respectively. In this way, Divakaruni has been rightly described as an award-winning author of great calibre who has dealt with the troubled lives of immigrant women from feministic standpoint. Through her works of art, she has projected the hollowness of immigrant dream, the pain, the suffering, and the horrors of the lives of the immigrant woman.

Divakaruni started writing to explore the immigrant feminine experience she encountered. Her first book of poetry *Dark like the River* appeared in 1987. It established her as an eminent poet. In the year 1990, she published the collection of verse *The Reason for Nasturtiums*. The volume shows her interest in the immigrant experience and south Asian women, who try to find out their own identities in new sociocultural environment.

While going through Divakaruni’s fiction or poetry, reader continuously moves between two entirely different sociocultural environments and comes to know several aspects of the lives of the immigrant women. It becomes essential to have a glance at the writing of the author, who is continuously writing about immigrant women. The researcher, in this study, has attempted to figure out immigrant feminine experience in the literary works of Divakaruni.
1.7.1 Divakaruni’s Literary Contribution

*Black Candle* (1991) is an earlier collection of poetry that records significant moments in the lives of South Asian Women. It has reference to Indian films. The movie *Spices* is based on *Makers of Chilli-Paste* poem. In it, Divakaruni pictures the restricted existence of women in society. Divakaruni shows that there is always a ray of hope in life, though, there is lot of hardship. *Two Women outside Circus, Restroom* and *Bengal Night* are the other poems of the collection. Jane Hirshfield comments about *Black Candle* in this way:

“Black Candle is a book that bears witness to the condition of women and to the condition of the world. Rich with colours, sounds, scents, with flowers and spices and fabrics and waters and sorrows and smoke, the world in this book is a necklace of bright pearls that burns the skin, yet is daily lifted up and owned, fastened to the body with a jewelled clasp: the compassion of Chitra Divakaruni’s fiercely seeing heart.”

*Leaving Yuba City: New and Selected Poems* appeared in 1997. It includes new poems as well as old ones from *Dark Like River, The Reason for Nasturtiums* and *Black Candle*. The poems are about women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Themes of these poems are very similar to the subject matter of her novels i.e. women’s problems, family life, exile, alienation, exoticism, ethnicity, domesticity, love and Romance.

*Leaving Yuba City* covers the area from author’s adventure of going to a convent school in India run by Irish nuns and the history of earlier Indian immigrants in America. The collection includes six sections of interlinked poems and though, they feature same type of characters, they explore variety of themes. It is a unique
collection of poetry as it is based on and inspired by various art forms including paintings by American painter Francesco Clement, photographs by Indian photographer Raghubir Singh and specific Indian films, such as Mira Nair’s *Salam Bombay* (1988), Satyajit Ray’s *Chare-Baire* (1984). Through her writing, Divakaruni shows how boundaries could be destroyed and how different art forms are not independent entities, but can influence and inspire each other. Like Divakaruni’s other writings, the poems of this collection have dealt with the experiences of immigrant women and their struggle for identity.

Divakaruni’s first collection of short stories *Arranged Marriage* (1995) mainly focuses on Indian immigrant women, caught between two worlds. The characters are both, liberated and trapped by the cultural changes and all struggle to find their identities. These stories explore the cross-cultural identities of women through a feminine point of view. In India, the parents generally arrange marriages for their children. However, after migration has broadened the psyche of Indian immigrant women, they have started thinking about this as injustice done to them. The second generation of Indian immigrants easily accept the free and easy American culture whereas their parents, who have migrated as adults, find it difficult to accept the American culture easily. Divakaruni analyses the very well cherished Indian institute of arranged marriage from various aspects. The way changing times affects the Indian institution of arranged marriage is the theme of eleven stories included in *Arranged Marriage*. There are several immigrant brides. The stories capture the experiences of recent Indian immigrant women mostly from professional classes and the few from the working class. Though these stories have references to author’s locality and her Bengali culture, still they are not very autobiographical. Divakaruni says, it is the outcome of her imagination and the experiences of the others that deal with domestic
violence, crime, racism, interracial relationships, economic, disparity, abortion and divorce.

Divakaruni has created contradictory as well as connected fictional worlds through her stories in *Arranged Marriage*. How difficult it is for an Indian woman to break the shackles of her unhappy marriage, in which she is trapped by the traditional Indian institute of arranged marriage, is discussed in the opening story *Bats*. In *Clothes* Narrator Sumita’s husband dies and she has to decide, whether to stay in America or to go back to India. America, here, provides a kind of relief to an Indian immigrant woman from the troubled life of widowhood in traditional India. In *Silver Pavements Golden Roofs*, the protagonist is a graduate student, newly arrived in America, which she considers as a land of illusion. However, she has to face racism on wide Chicago road. In *Affair*, two temperamentally mismatched couples are shown divorced after a few years. Their marriage was arranged traditionally, based on their horoscopes having matched perfectly. In *Doors*, the character Preeti likes western idea of privacy and does not like when her husband’s friend comes to live with them.

Thus, the common theme that runs through all the stories is Indian immigrant women struggling to adjust and to find their identity in society. The characters of the stories are different but the theme remains the same. The comment in the Midwest Book Review is noteworthy:

“Indian-born girls and women who are torn between two cultures receive a fine collection of stories which examine women’s independence and roles under India’s social constraints. These are excellent, hard-hitting stories which are revealing and engrossing.”

43
Divakaruni’s first novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) is written with a blend of mystery and reality. Divakaruni herself says in Dissolving Boundaries, an essay for the on-line journal Bold Type (May 1970): “I wrote the book in a spirit of play, collapsing the division between the realistic world of twentieth century America and the timeless one of myths in my attempt to create a modern fable.”42 Its protagonist Tilo (Tilottama) is the mistress of spices. Tilo possesses the supernatural power with the help of which she helps people to overcome their difficulties. Tilo reaches the island of spices which she calls her destiny. At the island, she meets First-Mother who instructs her about the power of spices and the rules for the mistress. After having orders from the First-Mother, Tilo heads for Oakland, California where she sets up a shop to sell the spices. While providing the elements for the curries and kormas, she helps her customers to be more valuable and also helps to avoid their difficulties. The chapters of the novel are named after the species such as Cinnamon, Turmeric, and Fenugreek. These are the common ingredients of Indian cooking, but here, they have special powers and Tilo practices her magical power using them. Through the visitors of her shop she catches the glimpses of the local Indian immigrant community that includes abused wife, inexperienced taxi driver, a yearning young woman, an old man clinging to dignity etc. Tilo gives wisdom to each of them and the appropriate spice to clear the evil. One day, her life takes a turn when a man on a motorcycle crashes outside her store. Tilo tends to his injuries, while trying to ignore their mutual attraction. Her life changes when he touches her and they begin to fall in love. This man is an American architect. Tilo has to choose either to serve her own people by her magical power or to choose the way of her own happiness. She oscillates between social responsibilities and personal happiness, which is the dominant theme of the novel. The New York Times Book Review comments:
“The Mistress of Spices becomes a novel about choosing between a life of special powers and one of ordinary love and compassion. If Tilo’s choice is rather predictable, the way Ms. Divakaruni gets us there is anything but.”

Unlike *The Mistress of Spices*, her second novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999) is written in a realistic mode. It describes the complicated family relationship in Bengal. The novel deals with the lives of two girls, Sudha and Anju, whose lives have been changed after their marriages. Anju goes to California, as her husband has settled there while Sudha stays in India. Sudha and Anju, distant cousins, are raised up in an unfortunate Chatterjee family where there were only girls and widows. Fathers of both the girls died mysteriously on the same day the girls were born. Sudha and Anju are the sisters by heart, bonded closely together. These two girls grow into womanhood, while their hearts are merged as well as their fates also. Both the sisters are trained to be perfect daughters, perfect wives.

The chapters of the novel are named after two sisters Sudha and Anju alternatively. During the story, the dark secrets of the past are exposed and the loyalty of the sisters for each other is tested. Marriages of both the girls are arranged early, though, due to different reasons. Sudha’s marriage is arranged in a hurry, because she is so beautiful that her mother Nalini does not want to take any risk with her daughter. In Anju’s case, Gouri Ma’s illness forced her to marry early though she was not willing to marry. Absence of the Father also proves to be a deciding factor in the decisions regarding the marriages of Anju and Sudha. After marriage, Sudha moves to her new home in rural Bengal, while Anju joins her immigrant husband in California.

The novel focuses the dominance of male in Indian societies where women are always treated inferior to their male counterpart. Discrimination of the sexes begins
even before birth. Sudha conceives a girl child, but her in-laws do not want Sudha to give birth to a baby-girl, and want her to abort the child. Anju saves Sudha from the conspiracies of her in-laws and brings her to America. As the title of the novel indicates, it is the story of two sisters, their sorrows, happiness, difficulties, understanding and their love, sympathy and affliction for each other. The novel is set in Calcutta and it rightly projects the subjugated and marginalized status of women in Indian societies which proves to be a prologue to their immigration. Divakaruni portrays the family (Bengali) relationship with having keen observations and minute details of the lives of the immigrants. A prominent Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh has rightly commented:

“Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s account of family life in Bengal is warm and richly detailed. Hers is one of the most strikingly lyrical voices writing about the lives of Indian women today.”

_The Unknown Errors of Our Lives_ (2001) is a collection of short stories set in India and America. The collection includes nine stories and eight of them have female protagonists. These are the women caught between the beliefs and traditions of their biological home and those of their adopted home. It shows the struggle of these women to be accommodated in difficult conditions and to be assimilated in different sociocultural environment.

These stories have a diverse range of subjects. Most of them describe the life of women in the east and the west. _Love of a Good Man_ is a tale of happily married Indian woman, who has to confront her past, when her father begs to meet his grandson. In _Mrs Dutta Writes a Letter_ Indian widow migrates to stay with her only son and daughter-in-law, but after reaching there, she realizes the tension that arises between them because of her arrival. The old widow discovers that her old-fashioned
ways are an embarrassing to her daughter-in-law, who is changed after migration. A young American woman’s pilgrimage in Kashmir is the subject of *The Lives of Strangers*. Miscommunication and growing distance is the central theme of *The Intelligence of Wild Things*. Ruchira, protagonist of the title story *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*, discovers her childhood Book of Errors, while she was packing up for her forthcoming marriage. *The Names of Stars in Bengali* is the frank story of San Francisco wife and mother, who returns to her native village in India to visit her mother, but is desperate to get out of India due to her restrictive existence. All the stories included in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* are about the lack of communication, unarticulated love, and redemptive memories. The stories explore the difficult process of adjustment. This is an extraordinary collection of short stories that draw pain, loss and alienation of the immigrant experience.

The novel *The Vine of Desire* appeared in the year 2002, when Divakaruni moved to Houston, Texas, and there, she began to teach in the creative writing program at University of Huston. It is the sequel to her earlier novel *Sister of My Heart*. In *The Vine of Desire* two cousins, Anju and Sudha are reunited in America in the free culture, which is in total contrast with traditional Indian culture where woman is always restricted, marginalized and deprived. The deep-seated love they have for each other provides them a support they need. It gives Anju strength to survive a personal tragedy and for Sudha, it gives confidence to make a life for herself and for her daughter Dayita without any manly support. The different relationships, which these women form with men and women within and outside the immigrant Indian community, have transformed them into something different. The bond between these women is really shaken when they come to know the deep passionate feelings Anju’s husband has for Sudha.
Sudha tries to carve her own identity and tries to lessen her loneliness. She surrenders to Sunil’s ill desires, but flees from their apartment to avoid more disaster and work as a caretaker to an old and ailing man, Mr. Sen. Anju also faces the loneliness, but she tries to engage herself in something creative and tries to avoid the feeling of being alone. Charles Matthews’ comment in San Jose Mercury News is quite suggestive. He says:

“Divakaruni’s narrative in *Vine of Desire* is as gracefully structured as a piece of chamber music, with its interplay of themes and voices, ensemble and solo, working their way toward a final resolving chord…If you find yourself counting the pages left in the book, it’s likely to be because you wish there were many, many more.”

*Neela Victory Song* (2002) is Chitra Divakaruni’s first book for children. It is a part of *Girls of Many Lands* series. It is a story of Neela, a twelve-year old girl, who is interested in Indian freedom movement, while her family is engaged in preparation of her elder sister’s marriage. Neela knows that very soon her parents will be arranging her marriage also. Neela’s father is arrested following a march against British Emperor. Then Neela takes the matter into her own hands and goes to Calcutta to find him.

Divakaruni manages to handle two different goals in this novel. One is to present the struggle for Indian independence, and another is how a twelve-year sensitive girl might have seen it. Some part of the story is about the struggle of Indian independence, while other is about the questions the twelve year girl faces regarding arranged marriage, the education of girls etc. Reviewing the book on the Voices from the Gaps: Women Writers of Colour Web site stated that: “Victory Song not only
educates young readers about India’s culture and past, but also manages to entertain brilliantly with a likeable main character and a suspenseful plot that keep young readers interested.”

*The Conch Bearer* (2003) is Divakaruni’s second book for children; a quest fantasy which blends action, adventure and magic. The story opens in a poor section of Kolkata where a twelve-year old boy, Anand, is given a conch shell, that possess a magical power, and is asked to return the shell to its rightful home that is high up in the Himalaya. Abhayadatta, a mystic healer and Nisha, a street sweeper poor boy dressed in rags accompany Anand. Anand undertakes a perilous journey during which the villainous Surabanu follows him. Anand encounters both good and evil within himself and around during the journey. This is Divakaruni’s special creation in her unique style.

*Queen of Dreams* (2004) is Divakaruni’s sixth novel that again utilizes magic. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo gives spices to help her customers and to solve their problems and in *Queen of Dreams* Mrs Gupta deciphers the dream of others and helps them in their real lives. Mrs. Gupta’s daughter Rakhi is a young artist and a divorced mother living in Berkeley, California and is fascinated with her mother’s ability to foresee and guide people through their fates. Rakhi feels isolated from her mother’s past in India and the dream world she inhabits. She is determined to know the other side of her existence i.e. Indian. Before Rakhi ‘discovers’ the journals, she has been creating a sense of ‘homeland’ through photos of India and other images available through globalized networks of communication. She is a painter and she creates for herself an ‘imagined India’ through these images.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have made the novel a national tragedy. Rakhi and other immigrants face many troubles. Their notion of citizenship is
questioned and their loyalty to America is challenged. Racism, hate-crime and ugly violence are forced on them repeatedly, and their only guilt is the colour of their skin, their appearance and their existence as immigrants. Haunted by that horrible events and the experience of racism, Rakhi finds unexpected gifts such as the possibility of new love and understanding for her family. Divakaruni effectively takes the readers into immigrant culture and their miserable state. Reader is forced to see racism, hate-crime and terrorism the point of view of immigrants. The comment in Denver Post shows the greatness of the novel:

“This story of an emotionally distant mother and a 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, in a fresh mix. The tale succeeds on two levels. She effectively takes the reader into an immigrant culture but she also shows the common ground that lies in a world that some would find foreign. The search for identity and a sense of emotional completion is not confined to small corners of the world. It is a dilemma that all readers can understand.”

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and William E Justice edited California Uncovered; Stories for the 21st Century (2004), a collection of writing about the new California, published in collaboration with the California Council for Humanities. California uncovered is a sincere look at the puzzles and paradoxes those have created today’s California.

The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming (2005) is a second novel of the Brotherhood-trilogy. Here, the master storyteller takes us from the original beauty of
Himalaya to the world of an ancient kingdom, full of colourful Indian valleys and
aromas. An evil magician and a Jinni are planning a downfall of the Royal family.
However, can Anand defeat the evil magician and finds his friends lost during his
metaphysical journey and return to his age and world without that powerful conch
shell? The answers to these questions lie in the partly fantastic and partly real world
of the novel.

The novel *The Palace of Illusion* (2006) takes the reader to the time of great
Indian epic *Mahabharata* which is historical, mythical and magical. However, the
novel has its relation to today’s war-torn world. Through the female narrator Panchali,
Divakaruni gives the rare feminine interpretation of the epic. Indian Epic
*Mahabharata* is told by and from the point of view of an amazing woman Panchali,
the wife of five Pandavas who were cheated by their stepbrothers Kauravas.

The novel describes Panchali’s life beginning with her magical birth in fire as
the daughter of a king. Later on, she becomes a wife of five Pandavas. Panchali is
involved in the Pandavas’ quest to regain their birth-right from their brothers,
Kauravas. However, the novel also deals about Panchali’s attempts to take control of
her household from her mother-in-law, her complicated friendship with Lord Krishna,
or her secret attraction for a mysterious man, who is her husband’s most dangerous
enemy. *The Palace of Illusion* by Divakaruni is an attempt to uncover the hidden
female emotions which is equally interesting. A comment in Library Journal is
noteworthy:

“A rich tale of passion and love, power and weakness, honour and
humiliation. Whether or not readers are familiar with the
Mahabharata epic, they will enjoy this entertaining, insightful and
suspenseful story.”

51
Shadowland (2009) is Divakaruni’s young adult novel. Anand the hero of the Brotherhood of the conch series, now fifteen, is settling back into his life as a learner in the lush silver valley, comfortable high up in the Himalayas. There, he continues to learn the secret arts of the Brotherhood, but suddenly his adapted home turns into a lifeless wasteland. Some mysterious force steals his beloved conch. Anand, with his friend Nisha, begins the dangerous journey of his life with the mission to restore the conch to its rightful place and his home to its original splendour and for that he travels to the cold and forbidding world of Shadowland.

One Amazing Thing (2010) is the eleventh novel and overall sixteenth book written by Divakaruni. It is another fine example of Divakaruni’s art of storytelling. It received great praise. It succeeds in holding its reader until the end. The author Ha Jin called it “a fable of modern time.” In it, a group of nine people from completely different backgrounds, religion, race, nationality, appearance and status is shown trapped in the building of visa office at an Indian consulate after a massive earthquake in an American city. These people wait either to be rescued or die. While spending the long hours of terror, they began to tell each other their stories, each recalling the One Amazing Thing in their life. These people share the things they have never spoken before. Their life stories seems to be tragic, but revealing what it means to be human.

Oleander Girl, (2013) is the latest novel by Divakaruni. It is a beautifully written exploration of identity and culture. In it, Korobi Roy was raised by her loving grandparents in India, and she’s always had a good life. Now, she’s engaged to the handsome Rajat, the only son of a high-profile family, and is ready to embark on a new life. But, on the night of their engagement party, Korobi’s grandfather falls ill, and after his death, Korobi discovers a shocking secret, one that will change everything she thought she know about herself, and the people who loved her.
Shattered by this discovery and by her grandparents’ betrayal, Korobi undertakes a courageous search across post-9/11 America to find her true identity. Her dramatic, often startling journey will, ultimately thrust her into the most difficult decision of her life.

Apart from her poems and her fictional writing, she has established herself with some nonfiction also. She writes a column for the magazine India Today entitled Stars and Spice which deals with the issues of immigrants. She edited an anthology Multitude: Cross Cultural Readings for Writers (1993) which includes the stories about cross-cultural communication, expectations of friendship, the 1992 Los-Angeles riots, and prejudice against gay people. She has written a regular column Spice of Life for the online magazine Salon (from mid-1997 to early 1998). She wrote a play in 1998 entitled Clothes which was performed by the Neo-World Theatre at Amherst College and at the International Drama Festival Athens, Greece in 1999.

1.8. Summing Up

Thus, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has established herself among the leading writers of Indian heritage writing in English. Everything she writes about is India. Though born in India for Divakaruni, local, at present, is America that is why she has been telling the stories of Indian immigrant women trying to be accommodated and assimilated in the free sociocultural environment of America. Women portrayed by her are exploited, subjugated and marginalized due to the dominance of male. These women have experienced the brunt of the sufferings if they cross the magical circle drawn around them by their home-culture. Her women struggle to create their own identity out of their immigrant existence. The hardship of the life of these women, while fighting against the established order of society and shattering experiences of womanhood, woman’s subordinate status, class conflicts, social censorship, gender
discrimination and the burning problem of female feticide and financial issues like dowry system have been explored from woman’s standpoint.

Divakaruni’s journey as a young Indian graduate, who moved to America and became the mature writer, seems to be a complete circle. Divakaruni left India at the age of nineteen means she knows India better though she has been in America for years. Therefore, she is an Indian, writing about India, as an outsider or as a stranger. Almost every work by her is set either in Calcutta, her biological home, or in California, America, her present residence. Her writing is the mingling of her knowledge about India and her experiences as an immigrant. She knows both the cultures well which find its expression in her literary works. Divakaruni often compares these cultures by putting her female protagonists into two entirely different cultures. She brings forward the contrast between the restricted existence of women in India and the possible freedom and independence in America, a land of relaxed culture. The concept of freedom and independence is always at the focus of her writing. Her female protagonists are deeply rooted in Indian culture, though they struggle for freedom and independence, and attempt to carve their individuality.

Divakaruni writes about how a woman views herself and her problems, as well as other women and their problems. She wants her women to view themselves as human beings and not as women only. She is of the view that women are not mere dolls or the sex objects for the momentary pleasure, but they are equal to men. Almost every work of art by Divakaruni ventures deep into the psyche of Indian immigrant woman. In her literary works, she explores nature and scope of the trauma of immigrant woman’s life.

Divakaruni proves to be one of the most important Indian woman novelists writing on woman’s issues from the perspectives of immigration. She describes the
attitudes towards woman in postmodern Indian society, and the status of woman in the
same. She speaks for the female category through her writing. She demands woman
emancipation and tries to create a humanistic attitude towards woman. In each work
of art, Divakaruni attempt to explore how either the individuals or societies are
exploiting women in modern times. Divakaruni also makes it clear that the traditional
concepts of stereotypes are being changed, and the definition of virtue of modern
woman is: “courage which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the
consequences.”

The present thesis attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on the
selected works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni with an emphasis on immigrant
feminine experience. It aims to evaluate her selected works and the versatile
personality of Divakaruni. Divakaruni’s protagonists are the victims of conventional
societies that does not allow woman to have freedom and independence. Her writing
consists of woman in search of identity, freedom and independence. Divakaruni has
commented on man-woman relationship in which she hopes for the mutual
understanding, trust and proper communication. She strongly feels for woman’s
exploitation and the dominance of man. She primarily focuses on freedom, justice and
the rights of woman that her protagonists sometimes succeed in achieving or are
struggling to achieve it. The present study is restricted to only her selected works,
more emphasis is on the study of her woman characters in the light of immigrant
feminine experience. It is appropriate to conclude with what Vijay Prasad has said:

“The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by
the rising tide of globalization; texts are now crossing the borders of
nations and cultures as newly emerging authors express myriad
voices of those once considered the subaltern. At the crest of this
new literary wave is a new generation of South Asian female writers who have begun to make their unique mark upon the world of the novel. In particular, Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have distinguished themselves as among the ground-breaking novelists in the genre of South Asian diasporic literature. Their accounts of the experience of the diaspora and its effects upon 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 we can better understand the processes through which minority identities are constructed."\(^{50}\)

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10 Big-Three is an epithet coined by eminent English critic William Walsh for three pillars of Indian novels in English Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao.


17 Manusmiriti (200BC-AD200) is a book containing rules specifically defined for women who practise Hinduism.


28 Vishwa Ek Nidam is the concept that expects the earth as a boundriless globe; it seeks the entire universe as a single nest under the governance of some supreme power. It believes in the goodness of the human heart.


31 Quit India Movement of 1942 led by M. K. Gandhi was the greatest struggle for Indian independence, the whole nation contributed to it.


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