



## MARITAL DISHARMONY AS DEPICTED THROUGH PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S ARRANGED MARRIAGE: A BRIEF ANALYSIS.

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### **Abstract**

*This paper throws light upon women and the life of women after marriage, through Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's **Arranged Marriage**. Through the work Divakaruni brings out the themes related to domestic life as the experiences in in-law's place, and difficulties in adjustment in post and pre-marital life, male domination both in home and society. She projects the change happened in the women's character from traditional self-sacrificing to women who long for identity, taking professional works, and defying male dominance. She depicts women as the central character facing geographical and emotional sufferings.*

**Key Words:** *Marital Disharmony, Male domination, Adjustment, Self sacrificing, Separation, Isolation.*

In the literary field Diasporic literature plays a prominent role as it associate with native culture and background. Diasporic writers are one who write outside their country but remains attached to their homeland through their work. Diaspora leads to sense of loss, alienation, displacement, nostalgia and quest for identity which leads to migration.

Diasporic literature creates a new space in the life of immigrant writers as they are torn between two worlds, culture, place and languages, this brings out their feelings towards their homeland. Later they pen down their feelings and emotions into writing. According to Rushdie, the immigrants carry their dreams and vision along with the memories of their homeland, in order to make their dreams come true.

The modern diasporic writers can be grouped into two categories, as first generation immigrants and second generation immigrants. First generation writers are those who moved from their motherland to the alien land, they find little difficult to adapt into the new environment. Second generation writers are those one who born and brought up in the alien land. Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Chitra Banerjee, Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya, Meena Alexander, and Anita Desai are first generation immigrant writers. Jhumpa Lahiri, Meera Sayal, Shashi Tharoor are second generation immigrant writers. Truly speaking all these writers have reached pinnacle of success in their writing by passing through bitter and painful experience in their life.

A Diaporic women writer focuses on the sufferings of immigrated woman. They suffer from alienation, love for the homeland, double identity, discrimination in the new land at the bottom of it all this happened only after their marriage, when they migrate from their motherland to a host country. The concept of Hindu marriage is described in Kapadia, as: "Marriage was a social duty towards the family and the community, and there was little idea of individual interest. The social background provided by the authoritarian family afforded no scope for the recognition of any personal factor, individual interest and aspirations, in the relation between husband and wife" (P1).

The above quotes is reflected in the diasporic women writers work, through their protagonist of the novel they try to project the life after marriage by expressing social, economic and political things in the society. Marriage is considered as a social system through which a man and a woman come closer to each other and start living together. But unsatisfying and stressful marital relations lead to emotional disturbances and marital disruption.

Marriage can be defined as a union between two people which is legalized by the culture and traditions that recommend the rights to the partners. Marriage signifies the equal partnership and intimate union between a male and a female. Through this strong association it connects two individuals under a relationship called husband and wife. The concept of marriage varies from culture to culture but its meaning is the same.



In marriage two individuals, get together from different backgrounds. It naturally takes some time to get to know and understand each other. Their thinking, attitudes, mindsets, behavioural patterns and thoughts varies. After marriage they have to adjust according to each other's perception and compromises between themselves rather than breaking with each other in the event of differences and dissimilarities.

After marriage women undergoes many transformations. She has to leave her parent's house and move to a new environment. When she get new environment, she got lot of responsibility in her life. Indian mythology describes a married woman under fourfold: "she is ardhangani, one half of her husband, symbolically speaking; sahadharmini, associate in the implementation of human and celestial goals; saharmini, a part to all her husband's deed and sahayogini, a complete cooperator in all his endeavor. Husband and wife mutually are called dampati, joint holders of the house, sharing work in terms of their genetic, emotional and individual dharma".

In Indian English fiction familial relationship got a special place, there were many themes in Indian English fiction. Meenakshi Mukherjee states that in connection with an examination of human relations in Indian English fiction, it is essential to know the fact that most of the novels depict an idealistic tendency. Meenakshi Mukherjee points to one very obvious drawback:

"The man-woman relationship in which the man's role is dynamic and the woman's passive is a pattern that goes very deep in to the Indian ethos. This ideal is so much a part of the Indian mind that an Indian reader never pauses to wonder whether the numerous novels that portray the relationship and present the woman as the symbol of purity and goodness draw the material from real life, or merely follow a literary convention" (The Twice Born Fiction 165).

The familial relationship in Indian English Fiction is beautifully portrayed in the novel **Arranged Marriage** by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. She has taken up variety of issues including racism, interracial relationships, abortion, divorce, cultural shocks and identity crisis. She brings out the conflict faced by the immigrant between the traditions of her their homeland and the culture in the adopted country. In an interview Divakaruni says.

"As immigrants we have this enormous raw material, which is often very painful and puts us in a position of conflict, which is very good for a writer. We draw from a dual culture, with two sets of world-views and paradigms juxtaposing each other."(Divakaruni).

Through her short story collection **Arranged Marriage**, Divakaruni focuses on women from India caught between two worlds. Stories in this book are inspired by her imagination and experience of other fellow women. Through this, she conveys the emotional turmoil of her heroines. This paper brings out the marital disharmony of immigrant women and their sufferings after the life of marriage in the alien land.

According to Divakaruni marital disharmony becomes a common problem in the present world, which leads to abandonment, mental illness, and disloyalty. Men and women as they don't have proper understanding, flexibility and self-control it results in various psychological and social aspects of life.

In Indian traditional families, women play an important role. The image of Indian woman stems from Indian mythology and the manner in which Indian females are represented during ancient times. For instance epic character "Sita" was a great example for all Indian women, who remain loyal to her husband and represents as ideal Indian wife. In the story **Meeting Mrinal**, the protagonist Asha a divorced woman who lives with her son and her attempts at familial perfection like the epic characters was not fulfilled and she states that: "I think of how hard I always tried to be the perfect wife and mother, like the heroines of mythology I grew up on – patient, faithful Sita, selfless Kunti" (Arranged Marriage 298).

Divakaruni poignantly pointed out the patriarchal society and the injustice in the life of women and the girl children, which is quiet reality in many villages in India. It can be seen through the story **Ultrasound** which portrays the realistic life of mother after the birth of a girl child in a village. Village people considered girl child as



a curse and burden of the family. This made the life of Runu becomes more questionable as she gave birth to a girl child.

Through the story **Doors** Divakaruni brings out the joint families in India where there is no private or personal space as if in the West. Preeti from America married Deepak, who is from India and settled in America, when Deepak's younger sibling came to stay with them to pursue his higher education in America. This brings a misunderstanding between the couples and Preeti expected some private space. She is not ready to share her house with anyone. So this made her to have her doors closed always for her personal space.

In the story **Clothes**, Divakaruni depicts the beautiful life of husband and wife but which was scattered soon by the death of husband. She suffered a lot in the hands of in laws and she feels as if doves with no wings. The marital disharmony causes not only because of the misunderstanding of the couples but also the conflicts arise by the in laws.

**The Word Love** exposes live-in relationship of the heroine in western style. Divakaruni brings out how mother-daughter relationship plays an important role in Indian culture than other culture. This made the protagonist to recollect how her mother had taken pains to bring her up after her father's death. She regrets for her mistake and thus parental love makes her take a decision to live alone. Love is considered as a magical word which change the person.

In **Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs**, focuses on dilemma of the immigrant Jayanti who migrates from Calcutta to California to live with her aunt Pratima and Uncle Bikram. Jayanti feels that nothing changed in her life; she feels that she lives in the same world, where Indian tradition remains the norms, as her aunt face male domination in the alien land, sufferings and she don't have any freedom and independent life. Jayanti thinks that her aunt lives in Indian tradition even in the American culture.

The protagonist of the story **The Disappearance** disappears without any reason. She is a well educated girl and wishes to follow American culture. But her husband didn't wish her to behave like American women. When she decides to go for a job or buy American clothes her husband made a statement: "what for, I'm here to take care of you or you look so much prettier in your Indian Clothes, so much more feminine" (Arranged Marriage 172). Divakaruni pictures the plight of Indian women who have no understanding or equality in their marriage.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's characters are mostly Indian women growing up in India in very traditional family. The protagonist main intention is to lead a peaceful and happy life. The life of women in the story is caught between pressures of the past and hopes and aspiration of the new, the present and the future. Sometimes they are seen making bold and courageous choices to carve new identities and space in their life. Divakaruni states that:

"Many characters in **Arranged Marriage** are dealing with this sudden change in worldview, at once exhilarating and also terrifying. They have to make sense of the new situation, which begins to transform them as women. It begins to change their relationships with the people in their family – their husbands, who are with them in the new country, and their parents, who usually are back in India. There are children who are now born in the new environment, still caught between two cultures, yet with a completely different worldview." (Interview with Divakaruni).

**Arranged Marriage** reveals Divakaruni's concerns for the lives of women, mainly of women from India. Her stories explore the complexities of women's lives as they led in India and America. The women in **Arranged Marriage** expose the change in the attitude of the Indian American woman in the domestic sphere and their gaining in confidence in making choices for themselves as they lead their lives as women in the diasporic background.



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