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ABSTRACT

As a cultural process, hybridity binds together many nationalities and their family traditions. Divakaruni successfully mixes the familial rituals of Asian American immigrants with the new surroundings in that scenario. In this paper, the researcher has investigated and exposed the manifestations of cultural identity and hybridity. This article investigates the role of immigrant women in cultural ethics and shows how their straddled culture constrains the three cultural identities in Divakaruni's novel Queen of Dreams: suppressed Indian, colonial European, and new world Americans. The existence of these three cultural identities confers a diasporic identity to Indians. These characteristics indicate their rootlessness and identification with the host country's culture and customs. In this novel, Divakaruni has merged ancient history with the aspirations of an occidental civilization. Rakhi speaks up against the mental anguish, cultural isolation, and identity crisis of India's displaced people. She tries to fit in with new cultures. The idea of immigrant strife infuses most of Divakaruni's work, a battle between acquired and accepted cultural norms.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Hybridity, Immigration, Identity, Cultural Barriers.

INTRODUCTION

Queen of Dreams focuses into the life of an Indo-American who is divided between two identities or heritage. Divakaruni's work is focused by the subject of immigrant struggle - a battle between taught and accepted cultural norms. The challenges of writing about two worlds are considerable, but Divakaruni has conquered them. The process of assimilating into the new environment will undoubtedly continue by embracing the immigrant group's positions and cultures, as seen by inter-marriages, cultural traditions, and gastronomy. Bengali culture has been extensively strewn throughout Divakaruni's narrative. Her Bengali origins have become a realm inside a universe, resembling two concentric rings.

Objectives

Immigrant families make every effort to retain their own original culture in their newhouses in the nation where they have settled. They adapt to the adopted country's traditions and customs, and encourage their offspring to accept the local heritage of their host nation, as well as to use terminology such as immigrants and diaspora, with the addition of new values to their cultural system. In this article attempts to provide an insight into Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams, as well as her devotion and dedication to addressing the concerns of immigrant women and their experiences, as well as making them strong enough to face life's challenges fearlessly in a multi-cultural world.

Hybridity and Cultural Identity

Rakhi's inner seclusion is the novel Queen of Dreams most notable feature as a result of her mother's lack of knowledge about her mother's homeland. Diasporans frequently feel separated from their country, and this is the price they must pay for greater future possibilities and a better living. Mrs Gupta's Dream Journals become emblematic of her thought process as she wishes to present the painful reality in front of her daughter. It is her memory portfolio, stored in a book that is later employed as a tool for re-discovery.

Queen of Dreams examines into the relationship between the conscious and subconscious mind, "the author has spun an enchanting story of a second generation immigrant trying to divine her identity, with her dream-interpreting mother contributing to the mystery and magic. The picture of ancient India and contemporary America is simultaneously projected through the mother, who migrated from India with her husband and her daughter Rakhi" (malathi 348).

Rakhi, a undeveloped portraitist and divorced single mother from California, is attempting to establish herself in a violent and destitute environment. The novel *Queen of Dreams*, as illustrated by Selva Mari, “American authenticity which is the source of the American dream, fears and anxieties that the Americans are vulnerable to, and the immigrant Indian’s response to the emptiness and loneliness that haunts the inhabitants of this modern wasteland” (selva 189). It raises few concerns about an individual's identity crisis as he or she attempts to interact with the culture and traditions of the host country while away from home.

Mrs. Gupta, an immigrant mother, Rakhi, a lonely parent who grew up in America, and her precise American daughter, Jonaki, are the protagonists of *Queen of Dreams*. Divakaruni skillfully addresses the difficulties and misconceptions associated with cultural divides. Her primary interest is on immigrant Indian women stuck between two cultures. Women who reside out of the nation or are visiting India are stuck between two competing forces. Once a person moves away from his or her own culture and drifts into another, his or her former values clash with the new ones. This is precisely what occurs to the protagonists of the story. Mrs. Gupta is renowned as the Queen of Dreams, who is a first-generation Indian immigrant in America. Her employment entails researching other people's aspirations and advising them on potential pitfalls and issues. Mrs. Gupta, the 'queen' of dreams, maintains a deep connection to her Indian heritage.

Divakaruni has attempted to blend the sentiments of an immigrant with an oriental background attempting to be in par with the demands of a western civilization in Rakhi. Rakhi speaks out against the displaced people of India's emotional pain, cultural estrangement, and identity issue. This causes her to forget the difficult, unpleasant situations she had with her spouse and family. Rakhi's feeling of belonging and identity is intertwined with her search for cultural origins in India, where her parents were born and raised.

Some of the constituents of diaspora are culture, which includes food, habit, and language. But, Rakhi's mother's concealment of her status in the form of a dream-teller becomes an impediment to her roles being a mother and a wife. Mrs. Gupta retains Indian culture even in her cuisine. In fact, the more Mrs. Gupta urges Rakhi to stay away from the life of a dream-interpreter, the more Rakhi is curious about her mother's identity, since she thinks that by serving as a dream-interpreter, She would be capable of resolving the dispute between her yearning for roots and identity: “As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be an interpreter. But when I turned twelve, I grew obsessed with the idea. I saw it as a noble vocation, at once mysterious and helpful to the world. To be an interpreter of the innerrealm seemed so Indian” (QD 35).

Clothes and outfits

Clothes and clothes also carry a germ of traditionalism and serve as a symbol of cultural identity. Diasporans are perplexed about clothing since the old, conservative attitude contrasts with the modern, westernized current viewpoint. “Belle always tries to shed the last vestiges of her desi-ness” (QD 15). Rakhi's buddy Belle complains furiously that Rakhi is not properly clothed. The notion of Indian cuisine and clothing sends Belle backwards in time. She despises what she has been compelled to consume. Rakhi is devastated when her business collapses. she feels, “they’ll probably arrange my marriage to one of those upright young Indian farmers I can just see myself ten years from now, shrouded in fat and a polyester salwaar kameez rolling out makki ki rotis for all my in-laws”. (QD 81)

Because Belle has always wore jeans and T-shirts, traditional garments appear to her as a veil that would destroy her individuality, but Mrs. Gupta appreciates her clothes imported from India, particularly the shawl. The scarf represents the conventions and traditions that envelop her and define her identity. Scarf is the gift which she gives to Rakhi and on occasions which require special attention she takes it out and so she remarks, “The one thing in the ensemble that’s mine is a gauzy Indian black-and-silver scarf” (QD 93). Mrs Gupta always feels guilty that “she doomed her daughter to the bland life of suburban America”(QD 43).

Mrs. Gupta wearing traditional Indian attire, such as a saree or salwar kameez. She usually isolates her at home and only leaves to deliver her dreams to her consumers. Because she keeps most of her Indian culture and rituals, her identify is less significant to her. She swiftly adapts and fits, but her feeling of up rootedness troubles her in the background. Mrs. Gupta maintains her tenderness, embracing most changes and adjusting to them while being unaffected by them. She constructs an identity for her own self that centers surrounding her fantasy world, which no one, not even her husband or daughter, dares to enter. “Her unfathomable past and her clandestine working of the present are brought to light. Her dream journals are her only nostalgic reminiscences of her past life in the caves with the elders which actually establishes her cultural identity” (Selva 191).

In order to keep their Indian identity, this globalized diaspora strives to rejuvenate Indian culture in their native countries. They go through a multi-layered process of creating a tiny India in order to convey the idea that they are Indian. They are unconcerned with identifying as long as they make friends with members of their community. However, when they interact with locals as employees or neighbors, their ethnic identities as favored minorities is put into question, and they are concerned by the discussion of 'who they are.' R. Radhakrishnan states in this regard: “During the initial phase, immigrants suppress ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism. To be successful in the New World, they must actively assimilate and, therefore, hide their distinct ethnicity” (Radhakrishnan121).

Mrs. Gupta comes to a foreign land in pursuit of a better future in *Queen of Dreams*, but her dreams become a type of platform for her daughter Rakhi to confront the world in a better way. Rakhi uses her mother's reminiscences and her journals to reclaim her lost faith and trust. In some ways, it draws the family closer together, resulting in tight association.

Divakaruni has managed to provide a new depth to what is happening in Indian cultural contexts by including mystical components. Mrs. Gupta is the owner of this present, and she enjoys it. She refuses to reveal her truths to her daughter, Rakhi. Rakhi feels at home in American society, but she desires to dig further into her mother's boon. Rakhi is quite well familiar with American culture. Her mother's conduct as a dream interpretation astounds her. She is torn between wanting to examine and being relieved that she has not learned her mother's tendencies. Rakhi's insecurity is heightened as a result of this. Being an in-between is especially difficult for Rakhi, a second generation Indian-American.

R.S. Pathak rightly captures the journey of the modern Indian woman thus: "Her quest for identity is spiritual odysseys of the modern man who has lost his social and spiritual moorings and who is anxious to search roots" (Pathak 57). The emphasis is increasingly on the inner world of women rather than men. The issue of migration and hybrid culture has become both a comfort and a threat to women's identities. Rakhi notices how she has suddenly become an alien in the country where she was born and raised.

The events of 9/11 devastated the foundations of second generation immigrants who believe America to be their motherland. Rakhi is conflicted about her two cultural identities. She was born into the American society and has Indian ancestors. She is drawn towards both cultures but is confused where she originally belonged. Following the terrorist incident, the identity that an American immigrant holds was tested in a new way. After the horrific incident, individuals begin to display their patriotic and nationalistic views in the novel by erecting banners, which read Proud To Be American Or God Bless America.

According to Beena Agarwal, "On the one hand the phenomena of immigration have helped to break the barriers of cultural traditions; it has also made the life of Indian woman more complex. Indian woman with her traditional moral consciousness and limited professional skills finds herself more isolated and insecure" (Agarwal 10). The steps of forming cultural identities and hybridity is always changing. It is always altering. As global and transnational identities have grown, the concept of identity has come under scrutiny.

Race, class, and gender all play crucial roles in the formation of cultural identity.

The upheaval that arose in American society as a result of a tragedy has had a tremendous influence on immigrants' lives. They are labelled as terrorists for keeping the companies running, and they are put in situations where they begin to doubt their own identities. Jespal, on the other hand, has been mistreated and battered to the bone: "Looked in the mirror lately? One of them spits. You aren't American! Its fuckers like you who planned this attack on the innocent people of this country. Time someone taught you faggots a lesson" (QD 267).

The male's statements to Jespal, a second generation immigrant, completely destroy her sense of cultural identity. This occurrence has a profound impact on Rakhi, who considers herself to be a citizen of America. Following generations, for whom the new location has never previously been new and whose recollections of homeland are more fragmented because they have nothing to connect with.

A small Indian immigrant audience who visits the business on a regular basis and requests Mr. Gupta's performance of songs from classic Hindi films demonstrates their continuous efforts to re-establish missing borders in the hosted place (America). It also aids in the preservation of cultural hangovers, which are frequently diminished by the dominant culture. Rakhi partly recognizes her Indian ancestry as a result of the fire at 'the Kurma House.' Although she is hesitant to accept it, the customers' astounding, overwhelming love and encouragement give her with a clear picture of where she belongs. As the old guy puts it:

"Don't worry. The shop will be in mint condition before you know it.

Meanwhile, we'll keep coming, whatever food you can manage to make, we'll buy. And we'll sing and play and keep your spirits and ours up. We're all brothers and sisters here, after all, bhai-bahen. (QD 238)

Evolutionary process and cross-pollination are inescapable. Western culture is a synthesis of several ethnicities. Americans are fortunate in terms of heritage since they lack an ancient civilization such as Indian culture. In contrast, the history of India is extensive. India has its own culture and values system. Rakhi is a cultural acrobatic performer who was nurtured in both Indian and American cultures. Rakhi doesn't know who she is or where she came from. Rakhi regards America as her home because she was born and raised there. She "faces a sense of alienation in the sense of insider, outsider" (QD 32).

Despite her ignorance, she is continually bickering about her non-existent history and fantasizing about a trip to the mystical nation of India, which she will never take. She has no knowledge of her ancestral home and just a distorted understanding of what it means to be Indian. After her mother is dead in an unusual accident, her father offers to assist in converting the Chai House into a restaurant, "an Indian Snack Shop, a chaer dokan, as it would be called in Calcutta" (QD 185). The emergence of the outstanding coffee shop known as 'Kurma Shop' demonstrates the blending of two different cultures. The father not only strengthens their link by sharing gastronomic techniques with his daughter, but he also teaches her about traditions and customs.

After the explosion there at 'Kurma Shop,' she understands her mother's statements. Following the calamity, an

affinity bond develops. Customers' interactions with Rakhi become more casual as a result of the disaster. They are related since they are all citizens of the same country and form an unique ethnic group and community. Customers flocked to the 'Kurma Shop' to enjoy Gupta perform on their favorite old Hindi songs. The enthusiastic response of the father draws a huge number of multicultural artists to the firm. Rakhi finds that, "while some wear western clothes, and some are in kurta-pajamas" (QD 217). Although these people are her countrymen and they "share the same skin colour, the word foreign comes to her again, though she knows it's ironic" (QD 194).

First generation immigrants teach their children in Bengali in order to retain their "home culture" in their new homes. They also help them adjust to American society. Mrs. Gupta does not believe in American fiction, and her works brilliantly resurrect lengthy Indian mythology, ideas, custom, and heritage. Mrs. Gupta's remarks, which explicate and interpret the dream, serve as the essential point of the entire narrative. She is resolutely hesitant about her background in India, rather than reminiscing about it.

As a consequence, the father is finally allocated the responsibility of enculturation. Rakhi's primary consideration is for cultural connection, reciprocity, and continuity is met by the father teaching Indian culture to her via stories from his own life, so supporting her in recreating her cultural identity.

Rakhi's adoption to America begins with her birth, but her integration to American society is challenging. However, living as an immigrant provides her with enormous creative opportunities, and she has the ability to create new tales of identification and belonging. Her flawless integration to the host culture and norms is a difficult and demanding matter for her. Despite the fact that she was born in America, she does not have an American passport.

FINDINGS

The novel *Queen of Dreams* by Divakaruni goes into the issues of cultural identification building for second-generation immigrant families in the United States. She emphasizes the unique circumstances of this generation of South Asian Americans who are both at home and homeless. They must traverse the cultural boundaries between the United States and India while deliberately questioning their cultural heritage. Divakaruni also exposes the fragility of these cultural borders, since only the second generation lives in a world highly impacted by their parents' homeland cultures but yet firmly rooted in the American way of life.

Future Research Objectives

This article's portrayal of cultural identity and hybridity demonstrates the author's capacity to tolerate and absorb various cultures without losing sight of their original identity. Diasporic writers reconstruct their family, social, cultural, and political histories within their main source, resulting in uniquely hybrid literature. This leads to future research on Divakaruni's manifestations of diversity and ethnography in *Queen of Dreams*.

It is intended that this study would broaden the perspective of literature students, open up a new window for future scholars, and assist readers have a greater knowledge and appreciation of Divakaruni's novels. There is ample opportunity for academics to compare Divakaruni's presentation of feminism to that of other South Asian women authors.

CONCLUSION

Rakhi achieves success in life by embracing American norms, but she faces a pitfall owing to worries on her sense of community and identity. Mrs. Gupta, on the other side, prefers to accommodate, to remain Indian in the middle on American soil, to quickly switch to American way of life for a purpose - a thing, which holds importance to her, a ridiculous price she can happily pay to safeguard the jurisdiction of imaginations that allow her to be heard by people all over her, Indian or otherwise, and facilitate them with one's issues. Despite Mrs. Gupta's primary resistance to share her heritage, the novel *Queen of Dreams* depicts the chances of forging a cross-cultural identity. In *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni mixes the traditions of the two continents and analyses the friction between first and second generation immigrants in the construction of new cultural ideals.

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