



## FRACTURED IDENTITY, BONDS OF WOMENHOOD AND WOMEN STRENGTH IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S "OLEANDER GIRL: A NOVEL"

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper intends to explore the themes of fractured identity, bonds of women hood, women strength, love, and other diasporas experiences by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel Oleander Girl. Themes such as Indianess, religion, culture, etc also include with the above themes. The long kept secret of the family in the middle of story give a delightful impression to the novel. The novel exhibits before us the protagonist journey for the identity of her father, which thus turns into her own particular identity crisis. A significant number of Indian ceremonies and conventions have been portrayed in the novel. Oleander girl, Korobi, the protagonist, is going to get married to Rajat, the son of a rich modern family in Kolkata, on the very edge of marriage, she will find a hard truth of her family which will shake up her feeling of self, make her put off her wedding, and incite her on a journey to America that will at last change her in ways she can't imagine. Korobi's journey drives the novel and it is brimming with twists and turns, soul searching and difficult decisions. In this study, I have attempted to examine the long way that Korobi has travelled to be changed into a braver and stronger girl through the themes of fractured identity, bonds of women hood and women strength.*

**Keywords:** Fractured Identity, Bonds of Women hood, Indianess, Relationship, Love, Commitment, Women Strength.

*Oleander Girl* (2013) is one such example of fractured identity, women hood and women strength in a foreign land. It represents the female character, the protagonist Korobi, leaving everything and moving in foreign land search for her fractured identity and family's secret. *Oleander Girl* is a stage of Divakaruni's visits from Kolkata to United States and her thinking over family secret which are believed to be shameful by Indian society. Divakaruni discussed mystery, familial ties, women strength and fractured identity, bonds of women hood and various such themes. Korobi, an orphaned young girl being raised by her loving grandparents in Kolkata, she finds a hard secret about herself and her family. Her shocking truth of life shatters her identity and takes her out from her home Kolkata into a search of her genuine



identity. She experiences the company of foreigners, crosswise over America, a nation where she finds unsafe, and dangerous.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel (*Oleander girl*) also considers fractured identity of a person as subjected to social demands. The writer has uncovered the significance and part of girl in Indian culture and their value as a major aspect of the sociality. She draws out that in India; family's reputation is closely connected with the behaviour of the girl. Korobi's identity is weaved with the reputation of the family and the great old family name. As Korobi is the granddaughter of Judge Tarak Prasad Roy who had a road named after him, this identity stun comes to at the peak when korobi observes her father to be a dark man and not a white foreigner. In spite of being accomplished, literate, well-educated socially famous individuals from society, both Bimal Roy and Boses think that it's hard to accept a dark man being identified with family in any way. This turns out to be clear when Anu visits her parents back in India during her pregnancy. She never unveils it to her father that the father of the child inside her belongs to an African-American Rob Lacey. Later, when Korobi herself finds that her father is a dark man, she is advised by Sarojini for not letting this news out to anybody.

Korobi who is searching her own fractured identity, on opposite she destroyed her identity, which she truly is. She understands toward the end that real identity is past what the society, culture and religion have set for her. She stresses of how to face people and how to make introduce of her fractured identity yet she needs to make people around her accept with her originality.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reflects the strong emotional bonds between women through her novel "Oleander Girl", Korobi and her grandmother besides the grandmother granddaughter- relationship, there is a bonding between women who understand each other better. This bonding between women cuts all the barriers of class, caste and education.

Korobi had covered up the book of poetry under her wedding cushion, just to be perused to Rajat in their flower filled room. The poem isn't a common one; the one "...My mother has sent to us...." (Divakaruni, 2013). These are the treasured lines of the poem,

*"He who binds to himself a Joy*

*Doth the winged life destroy?*

*But he who kisses the Joy as it flies*

*Lives in Eternity's Sunrise....."* (Divakaruni, 2013)

Korobi's mother, Anu Roy, she died eighteen years ago. Korobi had tried to get a glimpse of Anu, when she was in her boarding school, and away from her grandparents:

*"...All through my years growing up, I longed for a visitation from my mother.... I prayed for it in secret, and, when that didn't work, tried to put*



*myself in calamity's way.... But only ended up with bruises, sprains...''(Divakaruni, 2013)*

Bimal Roy, who prefers Korobi's to wear saree and dislikes her new dress. Soon we come to know that Bimal Roy has suffered heart attack, which, according to Korobi, she blames herself for the argument with grandfather. She feels guilt; she destroys and tears the kurti. Korobi's grieving for her grandfather keeps on being strong enough to make her love life get overshadowed for some time. Yet, soon she encounters a hurtful and shocking truth which slips out accidentally from her grandmother – "your dear grandfather lied to you and forced me to do the same. Your father's alive." (Divakaruni 52) (Divakaruni, 2013) . The words hit her hard; however she is strong and brave enough to recuperate to start her search for her father who is believed to be dead long before!

The fractured identity and search for her father which took her to America, which changed Korobi into a stronger and brave girl "...beautiful – but also tough" (Divakaruni 253) (Divakaruni, 2013) , like the oleanders. When she began her journey for her genuine identity, cut away from the world of boundations, 26 Tarak Prasad Roy Road, she should not have imagined the hurtful truths that would flip her life and identity With many encounters in an America, far from Kolkata, Korobi ends up being a brave girl who had learnt to make peace with her past, and also with her future.

Nina Sankovitch, in her article, Oleander Girl: Coming of Age, has said that, *"Korobi starts out young and sure of herself, but it is the confidence of youth and not of experience. Once she commits herself to finding out who her father was, experience come fast and furious and Korobi is forced to grow up''*(Sankovitch).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel Oleander Girl has also good theme of Women strength, she confronts tough circumstances in America being lonely from with her fractured identity; the main difficulty she confronts is at Kennedy airport where she was waiting to for Mitra who should lift her up from the airport. She is lonely however Mitra to receive her. In spite of confronting hardship, she is determined and after that she has first experience of difference between Indianess and Americanized culture when she discovers Mitra being impolite by not paying taxi fare; however he may have his financial problems because of struggle for survival.

Once in America, encounters get overflowed on her way; when Korobi arrives in America alone with none yet Mitra to get her, her spirited self transforms into an observant one. Her first problem starts in America is to be with the schemer, Mitra. Korobi gets a whiff of Mitra's wrong intention of blackmailing her in-laws and from that point onwards she takes extra alertness, While going to meet Desai, the private detective who will help her to find her father, Mitra goes with her, not to ensure her in this foreign part of the world, however to gather some news which can be instrumental in blackmailing the Boses.

At the point when a man, perhaps a tramp, with shaven head and tattoos approaches her with hands outstretched, Mitra let her stand lonely, vulnerable against the circumstance, Yet,

Korobi is not the type of young girl to act like a maiden in threat, rather she shouts, "Go away! Stop harassing me!" (Divakaruni 114) (Divakaruni, 2013). To fortify her voice she claps her hands and it works! The man quits advancing, and, Korobi's terrified self gets a boost when she sees an appraising look in Mitra's face – "I am happy to have disappointed him." (Divakaruni 114) (Divakaruni, 2013). This victory is powerful enough to make Korobi comes to know how to stand on her own, fearless and confident.

Mitra, who has keeping an eye on her, he doesn't even help to provide her a mobile phone. Be that as it may she meets one young man Vic at Desai's office who is his nephew and work as a part time assistant who broadens all his help. Desai shortlists three names on the premise of his investigation. Rob Evanston, an architect, Rob Mariner, legal counsellor in San Francisco and Rob Davis, a writer, in the Santacruz club. She meets every one of the three and finds to her failure that they are not related with her. In fact one of them tries to physically abuse her and one imagines that she is out there for money. These encounters smash her and she is about to give up when she gets a call from a woman named Meera Anand who concedes to knowing her mother Anu Roy and having stayed with her. It is from the photograph that she recognizes Anu which Desai had given in print.

The way she protects herself from Mariner, finds him off-guard, and he needs to accept his defeat. However, Mariner isn't such a man to admit defeat so easily, he destroys all chances to meet with her probable father who happens to be an author. When she has lost all hope to meet her father, Rob Lacey comes throughout her life and alongside that come two shocking truths that make her to see life in new and different light. Reality about her Afro-American heredity doesn't hurt her much; however the reality about the illegitimacy of her reality shakes her whole life. She was broken; yet soon she gathers herself, as she can't spoil two days that she has wanted to spend with her father. In anger Korobi throws her cell phone; yet Vic is there on time to help her. Soon, she decides to go back motel to continue her meeting with her father. She feels happiness to meet her father and to taste father's care, that she forgets everything. Korobi can give nearly everything without end to realize that man whom her mother used to love so dearly, she can likewise get to know details about her mother whom she can never meet in her lifetime. Korobi is not melo-dramatic; she needs love, regard and trust. Any girl of her age wants same things and yet she gathered herself quickly, however not without a vent - "I'm furious with everyone – my mother, my father, my grandfather" (Divakaruni 246) (Divakaruni, 2013)

When Korobi arrives India, her first concern was to inform Rajat about the two secrets of her life, before she can uncover them to him, the beans are as of now spilled by Mitra, who tries to blackmail the Boses for cash. In spite of the fact that she isn't welcome at the place of the Boses, when she sees that even Rajat has no faith in her, she breaks off the engagement and returns the wedding ring with pride. Karobi's broken engagement with Rajat or her recently found identity neglects to control Korobi's soul for a fresh start. She feels happiness with Sarojini, her grandmother, in their old house; she begins her college again to keep herself busy. Presently, she is happy Korobi who understands the importance of each relationship and can deal with them better. On her wedding, she is a completely blown oleander - beautiful but tough, prepared to take challenges. In this manner toward the finish of the novel, we find that Korobi has developed into an adjusted individual - a balanced oleander girl.



Consequently Indianess and Indian traditions and mindset can be seen in novel even in diaspora authors who may be reviewing India with such picture which Divakaruni, may have had seen and been reviewing. The novel presents Indian culture with the depiction of common Indian wedding and engagement function. It is observed that Divakaruni discusses the dread and anxiety that run with marriage and relationships. Love for Bollywood music also happens in setting of India as well as in foreign land. The writer additionally makes us see that how Indians in foreign land live more like Indians, Korobi discovers this in Mitra's apartment which is above Karaoke bar, its windows plastered with tremendous Bollywood posters. She wonders,

*“What a contradiction this apartment is! Noise from the karaoke bar below hits me in sudden blasts as guests enter and exist. Bollywood songs, nostalgic old favourites, the immigrant's longing to capture home. In India, I never cared for this kind of music, but now as I hear it, homesickness twists my insides” (Divakaruni, 2013)*

Indian food by diaspora characters likewise witnesses that how Indian dishes to makes space in foreign country alongside the little India they carry with them. They allude to Indian huge variety of Indian dishes are presented Korobi's at the engagement function and other different occasions in the novel. In this manner it is seen that the novel is full with Indian touches in dishes, as well as with Indian culture, custom and ceremonies and the Indian mind. Indian words are repeated over and over for example karhai, dal, chapatti, khichuri, pau bhaji, chutney, chai, khadi, khandaani, goonda sorts, mama, chappals and various others.

## Conclusion

While in America, with numerous enticements around her, Korobi oversees not to succumb to them, but she does better understand her contradictory self. Her newly attraction for Vic on one side and her pledges of loyalty to Rajat on the other, influence her to experience a passionate turmoil, which make her comprehend her internal identity, when she is experiencing financial problem, she doesn't act like a maiden in trouble, She chooses to trim her long hair to offer them for cash; this has been an exceptionally difficult choice for her, be that as it may, when she does as such, she feels "untethered", free from the burden of family's nobility and custom. But, even in the wake of getting baited towards the free and self-dependent life in America, Korobi returns to her Grandmother; she returns to Rajat, Now, she is a fully mature Korobi.

## REFERENCES

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