



## EXPLORING MULTICULTURALISM AND SELF-IDENTITY IN CHITRA BANARJEE DIVAKARUNI'S OLEANDER GIRL

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### Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a pioneering writer who highlights shared cultural traits and demonstrates how living abroad broadens the mental horizons of Indian women. Multiculturalism is explained in her novels by her. Immigration, cultural crisis, struggle for selfness, rootlessness, consciousness, self discovery, ancestral identity, awareness, diaspora, feminism, cultural hybridity etc are highlighted in her novels. This paper focuses on the study of an emerging, potent voice of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Oleander Girl.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shows that the protagonists' roots are deeply embedded in their native cultures, therefore they seek self-identity within a different, migrated culture. And this paper also attempts to analyze the protagonists' exploration of multicultural belonging and self-identity in the novel Oleander Girl. Korobi, the protagonist starts her journey from India to America to search her own father, ultimately her own self.

**Keywords :-** *multiculturalism, self-identity, immigrant, terrorism etc.*

### Introduction :-

The present research paper focuses on multiculturalism which has emerged as a dominant theoretical framework in several Western countries over the past four decades. Multiculturalism has emerged to understand cultural diversity and identity



formation in contemporary societies. The new technologies have made this world a global village. So, the human being can drive from one place or corner of the world to another. Easily one can connect with another. In a dynamic social context individuals can no longer be restricted by the rigid boundaries of caste, community or conventional modes of thinking. New think accepter accepts that mobility and interaction to satisfy his/her needs as well as to update himself/herself. That is the starting of accepting due to the practice of multiculturalism. Diverse cultures coexist within an individual in a peaceful and harmonious manner.

### **The conceptual framework of Multiculturalism :-**

The term Multiculturalism is defined as Multiculturalism may be defined as the coexistence of diverse cultural groups within a society, including variations in race, religion and cultural identity. It is manifested through customary behaviors, value systems, cultural assumptions, patterns of thinking and communicative practices that influence both individual identity and collective social life.

Multiculturalism is diversity of two or more cultures or costumes in some region or country. It is become a concept of human civilization, shaped by major socio-economic changes which occurred during the last three decates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This new concept of Multiculturalism endorses the accommodating possibility of people of more than one culture at a time.

This concept implies the possibility of living, working and interacting together irrespective of differences in caste, community, colour, religion and nationality.

“No culture is isolated; all

Cultures are involved in one another.”

Multiculturalism may be defined as political philosophy and social doctrine that acknowledges and values cultural diversity, presenting itself as an alternative to the process of assimilation. America and Canada are an immigrant countries where most migrated people are immigrants and integrates. They come from different countries and different places and different societies and different ethnic groups. They have different languages, customs, values, costumes, educational background, festivals, religions, dialects, foods and emotional suffered.



When these people leave their native places or countries, they use English to communicate instead of their dialect or mother tongue. They try to live as American people or earlier immigrant who are around them. While they are expected to adopt American culture and traditions in their private sphere they inevitably preserve their own customs, values, religious practices, traditional festivals, and lived experiences, all of which significantly influence their behavior. They are still sustaining their own cultures and things.

Multicultural ideas have also determined on literature, arts, popular culture and media education, legal, social society, behavior and writing opinions.

This is reflected in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who is a diasporic writer in Indian writing in English. Her works highlights key social issues such as racism, gender inequality, and the widening generation gap within the diasporic experience. She also highlights diasporic female protagonists, her alienation isolation, scattering, living in two cultures, identity crisis, exile, assimilation, mental trauma and dislocation at the level of diasporic consciousness in particular manner. Her literary focus includes issues of femininity, displacement through migration and immigration the South-Asian cultural context, along with explorations of history, mythology, magical elements, human relationships, and multiplicity of identities. She wrote many novels to explain these things or themes one of them is "*Oleander Girl*."

The present study explores the issues faced by modern youth in the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, highlighting how her latest novel *Oleander Girl* inspires them to take a stand for what is right. We should stand for what we believe in and leave our comfort zone this thing wants to apply in this novel. Through the protagonist of this novel, Korobi, Divakaruni wants to convey that today's youth should possess the confidence to accept the reality of our identity. Don't feel shame on it.

*Oleander Girl*, a novel is a story of the 17 years girl Korobi Roy who lost her mother when she was born. After that she was brought up by her grandparents, Bimal Roy and Sarojini. Their only daughter is Anu. Anu's daughter Korobi a protagonist loves on her grandparents because she feels that no one is present of her in the world. Her grandparents raise her giving a way of life as a grandkid of Roy family.



She is totally away from folks. So she cannot express her mind to before any one. There is a quietness that drives her life whether they are alive or not. She finds a letter which is dropped in book by her own mother. Then she understands about her own self and about her father who left her mother. She expresses that thing to Rajat who is her own engaged person.

She says,

*“ I need to find him, talk to him. I need to know who he is. And he can finally tell me about my mother the things that no one else knows. My mother in love. Won't that be am, too. But how will I find him ? I don't even have his name. And America is such a big country.”* (Oleander Girl, p67.)

At first, Rajat doesn't need her to go alone. In the wake of understanding her solid and decided self-discipline. Rajat is prepared to help in her search. She denies to marry before searches her father. And Rajat also accepts her demand.

Despite everyone else's advice, Korobi decides to search her father who loves on her mother. Her father is an Afro- American and her parents never married. That is shocking for her that she has no identity. Korobi's journey to find her father makes her face many problems and she understands face of the real, cruel world. She has strength and confidence to search her father that comes out when she faces difficult situations. She is protected and guarded by her grandparents but now she becomes brave and confident. In this journey she also faces the economical problems. Then she also sells her hair for money. She is committed to finding the truth about her father. Because she wants to know who she is and where from she is. She is struggling for her own identity. She thinks like an immigrant and her every action is directed towards her quest.

The novel Oleander Girl portrays a young girl's quest for self realization as she gradually confronts and understands the reality of her existence. It examines the underlying convictions and ethical values that influence how an individual responds to adversity.

The theme of the novel lies Korobi's psychological and emotional quest for identity. Initially, her identity is stable. Rooted in her upbringing in Kolkota within



traditional, upper-middle class Bengali family. Her journey to America shows symbolic of an inner migration – from certainty to ambiguity and untimely to self-realization.

The narrative emphasizes that within diasporic contexts, identity is not fixed but emerges as a fluid and hybrid construct shaped by constant negotiation. She is influenced by both personal and collective memory.

The novel shows the Multiculturalism through the novel. Korobi discovers that her father and roots are American who introduces her to a bicultural heritage. The narrative reflects Post-colonialism and diaspora discourse where characters inhabit “in-between” cultural spaces. Indian values and Western influences are making cultural hybridity. The novel also highlights how race operates differently across cultures.

### **Conclusion:-**

The narrative engages with the complexities of globalization by depicting the varied dimensions of human experience both enriching and challenging while examining issues like class, caste, gender, racism, terrorism and environmental degradation.

The post Godhra riots and the 9/11 terrorist attack on America show the similarity of terrorism but globalization makes cultural conflicts between the East and the West. The ever growing class conflicts due to unequal distribution of wealth, the by product of post industrialization which is present both in India and the US are all themes explored by Divakaruni in the novel *Oleander Girl*.

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