Second Generation Adaptation in Chitra Banerjee’s The Vine of Desire
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ABSTRACT
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian-American writer. Her works are largely set in India and the United States and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. The Vine of Desire is a story about family, friendship and the bond between sisters. Divakaruni’s fictional themes raises and delights all shades of Identity Crisis such as alienation, marginalisation, despair, nostalgia, readjustment, assimilation, adaption or adoption through her works. This paper discusses the concepts of second generation adaptation in Divakaruni’s novel The Vine of Desire. This paper analyses the position of these concepts and how they play important role in the life of immigrants. This paper also focuses on the relation between these two ideas in the alien culture and how the formulation of immigration and search for self-identity is based on the perception of second and third generation immigrants in America. The distinctive concerns they face and influence while trying to understand the nation are also analyzed; the expression of an existential which such individuals or communities feel from a ceaseless struggle between Western value-systems and their traditional Eastern ethics.

INTRODUCTION
The origin of Indian writers are creative and have fruitfully made their impact worldwide by producing praiseworthy writings that have gained an international acknowledgment enormously contributing towards the immigrant experiences of Indian Diaspora. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is settled in America and her deep-love for her birth place surfaces well in her creations. She portrays her frailty of individuality and search of self-identity in her writings. The women, who are migrated, feel the dislocation but they use migration as a step towards their freedom and individuality. It is difficult for them to isolate, to create harmony, to adapt the new culture themselves from the native country and customs, with the new surroundings. The term first-generation can refer to, either people who were born in one country and moved to another or to their children born in the country they have relocated to. The term second-generation refers to children of first-generation immigrants and thus reveals the same ambiguity. They brought that culture, to the migrated country where it is translated in the new perspective for the second generation. The second generation’s identities are based on the act of adapting behaviour to the norms of a culture or society.

Divakaruni’s writing persists that diaspora is not just dispersion, but it is an experience formulated of several journeys. It is decided by the traveller, where how and under what situation one travels. Divakaruni portrays immigrant experiences of expatriates who move to another country from their native land; face the conflict of opposing cultures, a feeling of alienation which is followed by the attempts to adjust, to adopt and to accept. The immigrants depict these challenges which differ according to the generation through the degree of this adaptation. Divakaruni recollects as an outsider
detects constituents with detachment from her homeland through her works. It imitates as a prompt of her identity, in this way she expressed the diasporic consciousness, through the relationship of women which interprets the universal problems of discrimination, dislocation and disturbance. Divakaruni considers the Indian women’s as a journey from immigration to the United States of America subjugated the conditions to freedom and discovery of the self with the motivation of western influence which distinct from other immigrant narratives.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Vine of Desire is a sequel of Sister of My Heart. The Vine of Desire is a blissful gathering of two sisters, Anju and Sudha who are portrayed in an extremely patriarchal society. Divakaruni portrays immigrant experiences of expatriate men and women living in America, who struggle hard to maintain their self identity and a realization of the possible freedom and independence in variable alien culture. Anju and Sudha were the friends and these two young women are at the centre of The Vine of Desire. The protagonists in the story are the two sisters Anju and Sudha. They are cousins and girlhood friends. After a year of living they separate only on their marriages. Anju migrates to America with her husband Sunil and Sudha stays with Ramesh in India. They don’t separate emotionally but physically communication goes through letters; as they come together again in America. They have deeply passionate love feeling for each other. The sequel begins in the story with a miscarriage of Anju, emotion, trauma which end in an abortion leaving Anju in depression. Sudha provides the support to Anju the strength to pick up of her life after a miscarriage. Sudha who choose to keep her girl child rather than abort is now a divorced woman. Anju feels the need for her sisterly support also change to Sudha’s exciting divorce. Anju decides “I want bring Sudha to America” (The Vine of Desire 18). Sudha saves her daughter by breaking all her restraints; she visits America to support Anju and to make a life for herself and her daughter Dayita. Sunil has nurtured passion for his wife’s cousin. Thus, Sudha becomes cause of her sister’s home breaking. So, she decides to go far away from her home, to work as a nursemaid to an old man to earn a livelihood. In the male dominated society, predicament of women is being victimized either as wife or the other woman.

In The Vine of Desire exile seems at first particularly for the two main female characters of the novel. Sudha takes divorce from her husband Ramesh and starts a new life. Although, Ashok proposes her but she refuses hem because she doesn’t wants to depend on Ashok assistance for her daughter future. Both lives independently are more in accordance with their own wishes. Anju by going to America with her husband can fulfil her dream of flight that is always correlated in her mind with freedom. Sudha thus gets the opportunity to start a new life away from the cruel judgement of her by society. The women’s allegiances to a place soon become divided and ambivalent; “I want to bite into the apple of America. I want to swim to India, to the parrot-green smells of my childhood” (87). Sudha soon endeavours by eliminating the Indian way of life she knows of and to get liberate of her image as a stranger by wearing Western clothes. Sudha is also worried to the westernised Lalit, who shows her a world that is devoid of the stable risk of social fault, latter which demands a close. Soon it becomes clear though that her past cannot simply be willing of. She can see that Lalit’s has never experienced in understanding her situation to concerning their backgrounds because she coming from an orthodox Indian family background.
Sudha considers that the tolerance she correlates with America can also have its disadvantages, such as emptiness and loneliness that it can cause in a person. After leaving the shared flat, she sees that, there are intolerance and notion in America as well. She learns about her employer’s belief that Indian women are peaceful and also feels how status changes, in her case for the inferiors, when leaving one’s country. She also starts doubting her one-sided celebration of freedom. At the same time she feels that it has really understood America and that the country has not given her all that much, and now she see that there can be a new life for her even back in India, but she knows that new beginning also means going to a different part of the country.

Sudha had the great expectations towards America but Anju never had. However, Anju also gradually changed her life there. She adopts a more Westernised way of thinking and owes something to herself. In the context of exile, the understanding of each other is more often than not an illusion. Anju keeps a critical attitude towards America, though in that she also acknowledges her negative sides. She sees the danger in looking at things out of context. Anju feels both defensive as well as significant towards her heritage, strongly disliking certain features of it. Therefore, she shows a similarly balanced and realistic view about America. Her realism and her critical ability also make her conscious of the fact that she idealises India after Sunil’s adultery when she longs to be back in the place where she grew up. She knowingly decides to stay in America understanding the changes that have taken place in her life. She is alert about the aspects of her own culture, she shows a more aware appreciation but she also analyse the culture in which she has grown up and the culture of America also.

By the character of Sunil, we come across the classical sense of alienation that often take places when a migrant goes back to his own country after having been away for a very long time. He experiences a culture surprise at the vision of the dirt and unhealthy conditions which he meets in India and it is not used to any longer. Sunil has also forgotten most of his Bengali and cannot recall what some expressions mean. This experience shows how alienation and processes of appropriation, conflict and communication take place both on a migrant’s arrival in a new country, either also on their return to their home country. The form of the novel also demonstrates how features of the protagonists’ birthright are continuously present. The various story lines of the novel, as well as the ways of how experiences are told, for example through letters, assignments or stories to the child Dayita which imitate the rich storytelling ritual of India in which stories become ever more tangled.

In The Vine of Desire, the union of the friends is challenged, it happened when Sudha and Sunil become seriously fascinated to each other. Sudha experiences a nightmare of guilt and she exiles herself from America. In Anju’s life the black comedy is her friend’s dishonesty and her role as a devoted wife is fragmented, but Anju rights their individualities and gets on with life. Their love for each other exceeds all complications. Their silence is invisible. Sudha feels that the old man is not leading his life happily because he stays in an alien land: “In this bed, in this house, in this country, all of alien to him” (176).

Sudha choose to lead a significant life of her own and for her daughter Dayita. It becomes essential for women that she must get their own eccentricity for a determined survival. Sudha and Anju fight against these forces within society which do not allow them to be themselves. Realisation dawns on them that if they have to progress for the better and march
towards freedom, they have to extract from men what they do not want to give: control, power and freedom. The family that Divakaruni portrays in The Vine of Desire comprises both men and women who are both strong and weak. In the marital field, the patriarchy has been come across with strong intelligent and sensitive women. The Vine of Desire discusses both modernization and preservation. It makes difficult for position of Sudha as a fatherless child, a divorced woman and as a mother in love with her cousin’s husband. The multifaceted connections of identity sign govern the narrative of the novel.

Divakaruni explores how Sudha adopt American life style, its impact on her thinking and she agrees with philosophy of American. She says in the novel;

“Live for yourself... I’m not sure what it means. I’m not sure how to do it and still be a good person. And I want to, you know. I still want to be a good person, even if I have failed at being a good wife... Yet I know I can’t go back to the old way, living for others” (139).

In The Vine of Desire, the most interesting aspect is that how Anju and Sudha deal with their increasing westernization. Divakaruni has beautifully observed the move stealthily onset of this cultural change and noted the emotional detachment in detail. Sudha receives an important letter from India and yet spends hours cleaning and tidying the apartment before sitting down to read the letter, thus this emotional coldness is in direct contrast to the lives of Sudha’s and Anju’s mothers in India and how the situation can be improved to lead an open lifestyle, discussing their daughter’s lives, offering advice and speculating. As the protagonists has own way of adoption of values and life in the country of her choice is another important aspect of this novel. This adjustment varies, depending on whether the person is a first-generation or second-generation migrant. The first-generation immigrants are constantly more consumed by the home they have left behind which is their land of birth and always suffer from a feeling of up rootedness that makes it more difficult for them to adjust. First-generation Indian-Americans are acutely aware of readily apparent cultural differences. Inside the home first-generation Indian-Americans attempt to preserve their cultural and religious heritage and expect to live according to Indian cultural values. For example, women are expected to maintain the household chores like cooking, cleaning, childrearing, etc. in addition to holding part-time or even full-time jobs which they take up in the United States. Like their parents, the second-generation Indian American also classifies his or her life. At home and within the local community constituent they are governed by the cooperated Indian lifestyle developed by their parents and the broader American community. Divakaruni marks essential moments in each of the characters lives with references to significant current events.

Conflicts usually arise from the cultural clash of American individualism and Indian communitarians. For example, a second-generation Indian-American’s desire to chase an undergraduate degree in the fine arts will not be supported by the family. Career decisions are based on their impact on the family’s well-being, not the individual’s. The second-generation is able to incorporate the cultural introduce but their problems are of a different kind. But they face and experience a greater sense of elimination and are constantly reminded by their examines that they are different, that they do not belong to the adopted land and all this leads to a great deal of conflict in the minds of
these easily influenced children born and brought up in a foreign land. Divakaruni portrays vividly shaped of the immigrants in the fiction. Lalit displays modern youth a doctor by profession of the immigrant of second generation. He believes that, “All immigrants are dreamers, you’re saying? Yeah, but they’re practical about it. They know what’s okay to dream about and what isn’t” (173), so here Lalit shares his immigrant experience with Sudha, in the novel we see diverse immigrant experiences in the different characters.

Conclusion

The emphasis of this study was to find out the identity expansion experiences of second generation immigrants who born and raised in India and currently residing in the United States. The present study exposes that the women characters portrayed by Banerjee in her novel The Vine of Desire, search for self-identity. With their self-identity, how they use to influence the development of socialization in other country. The findings confirm that Indian American identity consists of a bicultural theme. The groups studied are living in between two diverse worlds, the immigrant world of their parents, culture and community. The outcome of this study will provide a greater understanding of the experiences of the Indian American population and insights on how to respond to their needs during the stages of identity development. Most immigrants who have roots in vastly different cultures are involved in maintaining their traditions and heritage, while changing their way of life to assimilate into a new culture.

Works Cited