

Feminine Sensibility in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*

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Abstract

Chitra BanerjeeDivakaruni is a well-known woman writer in Indian English Literature. She has published many novels, short stories and poems to her credit. *Sister of My Heart* is one among the famous works of Divakaruni. This novel can be studied in various perceptions.The present study focuses on the feministic point of view. Divakaruni has depicted the sisterly love through this novel. The novel deeply narrates the longing for love, female infanticide, divorce, love and marriage of Anju and Sudha. Divakaruni brings out the life of Indian women and the problems they face in the male dominated society. The two protagonists face many challenges right from their birth, the time of marriage and after marriage. Anju is a naughty and day dreaming girl whereas Sudha is a calm, quiet and domestic woman. She obeys and follows the culture and traditions but Anju dislikes it and wants to be modern.

Key Words:Feminism, sisterhood, female infanticide, male dominated society, culture and traditions.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* is a novel filled with love and life of two girls Anju and Sudha. Sudha and Anju are the protagonists of the novel. They are two cousins born on the same day, raised up in the same house and they were finally married on the same day. *Sister of My Heart* is one among the famous works of Divakaruni. The present study presents Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's feministic point of view. Divakaruni has depicted the sisterhood love through this novel.

Divakaruni brings out the life of Indian women and their problems they used to face in the male dominated society. The two protagonists face many challenges right from their birth, at the time of marriage and after marriage. Though Anju and Sudha are cousins they shared and spend every moment of their life as sisters. Anju and Sudha get separated after their marriage. The girls are not allowed to go anywhere without company. They both had a half stressful life because their family has no male character. The girls did not get the chance to enjoy the outside world other than their house. According to the norms of Indian society a girl child who is under the care of women are noticed by every men. This is because if a girl child develops an affair with a boy, the mother is blamed. This makes the protagonists Anju and Sudha to live a stereotyped life till their marriage.

The first example for male dominated society is the love Sudha develops for Ashok. Before her marriage she has been in love with Ashok, a middle class man. But she has sacrificed her dream life for Anju, her cousin. Because if Sudha leaves the house for her dream life Anju's marriage will be affected. Though she is not interested to marry the man she does not like, Sudha accepts him for the sake of Anju. A girl has no rights to live as she wishes and if she does so it will affect the entire family and other women too. Both end up in a

marriage life after such sacrificial incidents. The male dominated society never gives a good environment to all women.

After their marriage Anju and Sudha faced a different life. Sunil's father, Anju's father-in-law is a great example of patriarchal aggression and woman-bashing,

When Sunil's father is around, Sunil's mother turns into a different woman. She bends her head and speaks in a watery whisper or hunches her shoulders apologetically as she rushes to fetch what he is shouting for. He shouts a lot, I think he enjoys it. Just as he enjoys quoting derogatory passages about women from the Hind scriptures. (181).

This is the act of Sunil's father but to Anju his daughter-in-law is quite normal. Anju who has a dream of flying to America waits for day for her departure from that house. But she feels sad for her mother-in-law that she cannot help her in any way. That is the culture of India, a daughter-in-law has no rights to question her in-laws.

On the other hand Sudha who is living as a typical daughter-in-law enjoys her responsibilities and is always busy with household works. Sudha faces a major problem, which is after three years of her marriage she cannot conceive a baby. This is also a prestigious issue for Indian mothers-in-law, they used to blame their daughters-in-law for not getting pregnant. Divakaruni has pictured the Indian women's life very well in this work. Though she is a Bengali woman, Divakaruni beautifully narrates the environment and qualities of Indian mothers-in-law. She also points out how a married woman gets into trouble for no reason. The great example is Sudha, she always blames for the delay. Not only in begetting a child. Not only that, she even consults a doctor to check whether she is able to give birth to a baby. Through this Divakaruni conveys a message that men are not blamed for such things. Only woman is targeted and blamed easily. After many prayers Sudha is conceived but she faces an unexpected issue regarding her unborn baby. Her mother-in-law identifies the gender of the baby which is in Sudha's womb. Divakaruni portrays the character of Sudha as soft and kind hearted till her pregnancy. Sudha's character is changed when her mother-in-law forces her to abort the girl baby she is carrying in her womb. Her mother-in-law wants a heir so that she forces Sudha to abort her baby. After many arguments and problems, Sudha leaves her in-laws to save her unborn baby.

Sudha who has sacrificed her love for Anju now steps out of her husband's house in order to save the unborn child. Sudha's mind does not mind her family's reputation and name when it comes about the life of her baby girl. Sudha and her husband get divorce and she stays with her mother. Compared with other women Sudha is bold enough to take such hard decisions in life. After her divorce people around her talk ill about Sudha. Though a woman saves a small child's life she is blamed for divorcing her husband. This is the way the society treats women even though she is good.

All Indian women are living a stereotyped life by accepting and sacrificing everything they like. In fact Pishi, Sudha's aunt is not allowed to get education after her marriage is broken. She is married at her young age but unfortunately her husband dies after some days, but her father never goes for a second marriage to Pishi. Thus, here Divakaruni shows that how much importance is given to women. When a man loses his wife he can marry another girl but when a girl loses her husband she is not allowed to remarry. This is the way women are treated in a male dominated society.

Thus the novel *Sister of My Heart* deals with feminist issues and portrays the plight of Indian women. The protagonists of the novel experience problems and they try to overcome many situations. This novel gives fame to Divakaruni as it has stylistic narrative techniques and unexpected twist in her works.

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