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Kasdi Merbah Ouargla University
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Department of Letters and English Language



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Myth and Symbolism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's

The Mistress of Spices: Thematic Approach

Presented and publicly defended by

Kaliche Housna

Supervised by

Dr. Hanafi Hind

Jury

Dr. Hanafi Hind	Kasdi Merbah University	Supervisor
Dr. Badidja Amina	Kasdi Merbah University	Chairperson
Dr. Doufane Madjid	Kasdi Merbah University	Examiner

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to all the people who assisted me

A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears... may **Allah** protect them

To my brothers: Zakaria, and Idriss and my sister Yousra

To my grandmother, Ma-Aichouch, may God prolong her life

To all my friends and family. I am blessed with your supportive spirits

To my teachers whom I met during my educational life

Finally, to myself.

Thank you for being in my life.... thank you for believing in me.

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Abstract

This study attempts to analyze themes of myth and symbolism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel "The Mistress of Spices". It provides further information on the connections between these two. Since the Diaspora is a major theme in postcolonial studies and literature, the study also examines the issue of immigrants and the Diaspora literature while examining the novel's main themes. The study offers a practical analysis of how language, setting, style, characters, land and home, social status, and cultural traditions are presented in the novel to construct the identity of people in *The Mistress of Spices*. The author incorporates cultural traditions, customs, and practices into her writing by using references to cuisine, clothing, and her native dialect. *The Mistress of Spices*, Chitra's prize-winning novel, has been analyzed as the epitome of a number of world problems that Chitra tries to solve via the portrayal of her fictional character, Tilo. the Indian spices illumined with the power of healing and the Old One who seems to be an adherent of Buddhism. Divakaruni described the lifeless spices as living beings. The Indian-American novelist Divakaruni has symbolically interpreted Indian spices to rely on knowledge outside of science.

Keywords: Myth, Symbolism, Diaspora Literature, Indian Literature, Themes, spices.

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General Introduction

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- Background of the Study
- Aims of the Study
- Statement of the Problem
- Research Questions
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General Introduction

Background of the Study

The writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni concentrate on diasporic Indian women who find themselves caught between two worlds. She illustrates how her characters struggle to forge their own identities while being caught in an ambiguous situation. As the Diaspora grew, it started to take into account how women were treated in the host countries. A Bengali author named Chitra is claimed to have emigrated to America. She was regarded as one of the earliest authors of Diasporic literature. Her books frequently show how the main character struggles to maintain a balance between two worlds. At one point, Divakaruni states that: “My characters struggle in the balance between family responsibilities and individual happiness which is in a way, at the center of conflict between our Hindu culture, which always shows the mother as the giver, nurture and sacrificing herself for the good of the family and the western concept of self-happiness” (The Sunday Statesman).

Divakaruni's first novel, *The Mistresses of Spices* (1997), is unique because it combines prose and poetry and makes use of magic realism. The story's main character, Tilo, sells spices not only for use in cooking but also to help the homesickness that the Indian immigrants at her store feel. With magic spells, she unified myth and symbols. This reminds us that magical powers can result in disasters as to their use and violation of these rules. She mastered her characters by using symbols and spices.

Educationists, psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers have recently had access to studies on ideas like myths and symbolism. Myths and symbolism are among common concepts that may be studied in a variety of fields of study, most notably literature. For instance, one of the most significant disciplines in South Asia is the study of literature. Literature plays an important role in teaching people about the issues that have plagued their country for a long time and have been a part of their identity since gaining independence.

Immigration, colonialism, gender, racism, slavery, segregation, and in the majority of these cases, the "Diaspora," which is the basic element that represents the existence of the society with exceptional attention, are problems that are addressed in postcolonial writing in general and Indian literature in particular. In light of what has already been discussed, the research concentrates on the difficulties of diasporic living in *The Mistress of Spices*, a work by the talented and imaginative

author Chitra. The Indian writer Divakaruni's works are largely filled with themes relating to immigrants and diasporic life since the Indian diaspora is unique and diverse in terms of religion, region, language, caste, etc...

Through her writings, Divakaruni hopes to improve the lives of Indian immigrants in American society. She does this by trying to show their suffering, difficulties, and depression and by examining how her protagonist might improve their situation in life by using magical spices. One of the most well-known Indo-Anglian authors is Divakaruni, and both Indians and global readers like her book *The Mistress of Spices*. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the problem of immigration is, in fact, first a conflict between different cultures. She has personally experienced racism, strife, violence, and nostalgia in American culture. In order to represent that experience, the majority of the characters are inspired by her life. As a result, Tilo was employed in *The Mistress of Spices*. The majority of her writings were inspired by Indian mythology and culture, and she was happy to draw parallels between her own life and that of the Indian diaspora.

Aims of the Study

Data collected for this research will concentrate on *The Mistress of Spices* by Divakaruni. Three factors served as the basis for choosing the subject: First, the fact that *The Mistress of Spices* deals with problems of immigrants in America, and therefore, represents Divakaruni's insights of the Indians in the American diasporic society. The other reason is that it is a tale of hope, grief, love, and the conflict between duty and desire. Therefore, the study will concentrate on how Chitra used mythology and Symbolism to examine issues of identity hybridity and immigration in her work *The Mistress of Spices*. Another reason to carry the study is the love of Indian literature as never has been before. We learned about the aesthetics, profundity of meanings, and morals of Indo-Anglo literature. By studying Indo-Anglian literature, we learned about the beauty, profundity of meaning and morals embodied in the Indian novels that serve as sources of inspiration. An author like Chitra is undoubtedly a source of inspiration for the present subject if nothing else. The work of Chitra which we are going to analyze today discusses two key ideas in the field of postcolonial literature.

Statement of the Problem

In addition to other Indian writers, Divakaruni is considered one of the most famous diasporic writers. Her writings, especially *The Mistress of Spices*, have received a great deal of literary praise for their many topics of postcolonialism, racism, oppression, tradition, culture, and immigration. The novel's main themes are the impact of colonialism on India and the struggle of Indians to preserve their culture, traditions, and identities.

Research Questions

The followings are the research questions on which the work was based:

- How does Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni use magical realism to portray the Indian myth in her novel *The Mistress of Spices*?
- What is the reason behind the use of symbolism in Chitra Divakaruni's novel *The Mistress of Spices*?

Significance of the Study

The study of Indian literature may be included in academic and practical courses to help students learn more and develop their abilities. This is just a small effort to help students, academics, and people interested in Indian literature and topics like symbolism, magical realism, mythology, and diaspora to better understand how writers use language and their writing styles to convey their ideas and beliefs on a high level.

Methodology

Several methods, approaches, and theories have been used in literary research. This corpus-based study uses a descriptive-analytical method to look at the symbolism and myth in Chitra's novel *The Mistress of Spices*. This suggests that the study focuses on a distinct method of gathering data from interviews, observations, surveys, and other common methods. We utilized a variety of literary texts, books, articles, papers, and trustworthy websites as a source for gathering data for the study. *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) and other primary materials were the major sources of

the data for the practical study. More specifically, we relied on a close study and a deep analysis to examine the representation of Indian culture/society through myth and symbolism, as well as the themes of diaspora and how they are shown in the novel.

Structure of the Dissertation

This work is divided into three chapters: Two theoretical and one practical. The first chapter will be a general overview of Indian English Literature in order to facilitate the comprehension of the subject. Then it demonstrates the major themes and the popular writers of this literature.

It also sheds light on Myth, Magical realism and Symbolism as the most important components in this research, and the section of Symbolism is divided into two parts: definitions of symbolism and types of symbolism.

The end of This Chapter Tackles the diasporic literature, that will be used in the analysis of the chosen novel *The Mistress of Spices*.

In the second chapter, we will try to present the writer Chitra as well as the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. This humble chapter aims at shedding some light on the themes of the novel as they are conceived as a very important section to deal with the chosen theory too. This chapter is divided into Four main sections. The first will be about the writer her personal and professional life, and her major works. Then, we will see the plot summary of the novel and the characters to better understand the story of the novel. Next, we will introduce the dominant themes in the novel. Then, Symbolism in *The Mistress of Spices*. The last part is also very important it will be devoted to critics that have said about the Novel and about the writer.

In the third chapter, the study will analyze the use of Myths, Magical Realism and Diaspora in Chitra's novel *The Mistress Of Spices*. This chapter is devoted to a practical analysis of the novel. As the diasporic writer Divakaruni tries to depict and portray her identity, culture and belonging, she defends her national identity through her ideas by using both the language of the colonizer and her cultural heritage and mythology. In addition, on the one hand, we will show how she constructs in her novel the notions of diaspora through setting, language, myths, characters, land and home, and cultural traditions. On the other, we will attempt to present how

she portrays her society as a hybrid. Thus, we are going to discuss how Divakaruni uses Symbolism, Mythology and Magical Realism together to prove all what has been said above.

The Literary Review

Previous literary works that deal with the same topic are implied by the literature review. The *Mistress of Spices*, in particular, was critiqued by a number of critics who took issue with Chitra's work. *White Feet in Black Sandals: A Study of Magic Realism as the Narrative Mode in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices** by Jagdish Batra and the article *Shifting Identities: Reinvention of the Self in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices** from the *Journal of Chakravarti*, Devashri, and G. A. Ghanashyam (2012) are examples of works by Divakaruni.

Chapter one
Myth, Symbolism, and
Historical Background on the
Indian English Literature
(Theoretical Part)

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Chapter One: Theoretical Overview

Introduction

In order to make the subject easier to understand, the first chapter provides a brief review of Indian English literature. The historical context for this literature is then presented. Then, it moves to a literary background in order to show the main themes and the dominant writers of this literature. In addition, it clarifies that Symbolism is the most significant portion of this research and that Myth is a vital component. After that, it moves to give a small background of Magical Realism in Indian English literature.

The final section of this chapter covers diaspora studies, namely diaspora in Indian literature.

1.1. Indian English Literature:

The term "Indian English literature" (IEL) refers to the body of writing produced by Indian authors who use the English language as their primary or secondary language, which may be any of India's many other languages. It is also linked to the writings of people having Indian ancestries, like Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry, and V. S. Naipaul (Rathod).

The term "Indo-Anglian literature" is commonly used to describe it. (The name "Indo-Anglian" is particular to the written language and is not to be confused with "Anglo-Indian. This work falls within the wider genre of postcolonial literature, which includes works from nations that were formerly colonized, like India (Ashraf).

As early as 300 B.C., India had already created a sizable corpus of literature that was composed of a number of Indian languages that were descended from a single ancestor language—Sanskrit. An ancient civilization that spanned the east and south had its epicenter in India. Both Europe and Asia have inherited the language, culture, and literature of this civilization. India established colonies in the ancient civilizations of Persia, Greece, and Rome in addition to Spain, England, and France. Because of this, the earliest Indian literature that has been discovered is a compilation of oral traditions (story-telling and oral tradition). These customs are known as the Vedas, which

include songs dedicated to the many different Hindu gods. They also include myths concerning these gods. The name Sanskrit, which means "cultivated," is frequently used to refer to Indian literature. As a result, a lot of Indian literature is a retelling of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two Sanskrit epics. The legendary texts are referred to as Puranas. Hindu literature spans from a distant history to the present and provides insight into the inner and exterior lives of extraordinary people (Carpio).

Due to the significant literary and social transformations that took place during this time, the middle of the nineteenth century is regarded as the Indian Renaissance. Legendary philosophers of the period, like Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, and Dayananda Saraswati, the Arya Samaj's founder, contributed to social, educational, and theological reform, opening the door for an Indian Renaissance and the birth of Indian English literature. It belongs to the larger category of postcolonial literature, which includes works created in once-colonized nations like India. Literature from the Indian English region dates back one and a half centuries (Kopf).

Indian English literature contributed to the common pool of world writing in English, which is different from Indian English Literature. The first one refers to the writings and creations of the Indians through the English Language; while the latter is all that is written by English writers on themes, topics, and subjects related to India. The Indian English literature, hence, is more associated with Indian English, the development of a distinct standard the body of which is correct English usage, but Indian soul, thought, color, and imagery, in the present and in the future, even in the evolution of an idiom, which is expressive of English usage. It is also related to the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It is extremely referred to as Indian English literature. It comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature-the production from colonized countries such as India. Indian English literature is dated back one and a half centuries.

In its early stages, the narrative was influenced by the Western literary form known as "The novel," and early Indian writers fully utilized pure English vocabulary to convey an experience and an understanding that was essentially and practically Indian. Its origins may be traced back to three factors: The British government's educational reforms, missionaries' efforts, and upper-class Indians' reactions to and embrace the English language and literature.

Early founding works of Indo-English literature were social, historical, detective, and romantic. They lacked the substance, panache, and skill necessary to make a lasting impression. Mahatma Gandhi had a big impact on Indian English literature. The new stream-of-consciousness approach was introduced to India by Mulk Raj Anand. The autobiographical method of the narrative was used by Raja Rammohan Rao, who is regarded as the "founder of the Indian Renaissance." Nonetheless, a few modern authors, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, and Nirad Chaudhuri, deserve credit for giving Indo-Anglian literature a name and reputation. Modern Indo-Anglian literature revolves around these four axes. Khwaja Ahmed, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Mrs. R. Praver Jahabavala, Maria Mascarenhas, Mrs. Vila Raina, Khushwant Singh, and other eminent authors have contributed to the development of Indian English literature (MISHRA et al).

The majority of the time, Indian English poets and fiction writers chose their themes and subjects with the hopes and eyes of Western readers in mind. For instance, female authors Kamala Markandaya, Santha Rama Rao, and Anita Desai in particular show a passion for the metropolitan setting. We get important insights from Bhabhani Bhattacharya and Khushwant Singh's very different perspectives on the tragedy of economic deprivation, unfair wealth distribution, and human degeneration brought on by political upheavals.

1.2. Themes in Indian-English Literature:

India is a country that welcomes foreign influences, not just incorporating them into daily life but also nurturing and customizing them to become their own. The clearest illustration of this phenomenon is how they incorporated English, a foreign language, into their culture. Indian English literature has advanced significantly. The Indian English Authors have produced a wide range of works that might appeal to the readership's innumerable interests. Indian English novels have demonstrated in the international literary scene how authors may pique the reader's curiosity and imagination by portraying various issues in a moving way. This includes themes like the East-West conflict, multiculturalism, social realism, gender issues, the comedic side of human nature, ecological concerns, magic realism, and writings from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Some of the recurrent themes that managed to captivate readers' attention and carve out a long-lasting niche for themselves include the following: Historical, political, and nationalist themes;

social realism; immigration and the Indian diaspora; personal experiences; feminism; and contemporary topics. The new English works show confidence in tackling novel subjects, issues, and experiments with fresh approaches and coping mechanisms.

Indian English writers of today are rapidly enlarging India's literary canon in novels and short tales, and they have produced a prodigious body of work on a wide range of subjects. They portray life in India and the lives of Indians abroad in a way that reflects Indian culture, customs, social ideals, and even Indian history. The following are some of the subjects that appear most frequently in Indo-Anglian literature:

1.2.1. Historical, Political, and Nationalist Themes:

It's been almost 200 years since Raja Ram Mohan Roy's 'Sati' was published in 1818. During this tumultuous period, they witnessed the laborious and problematic transition from colonial oppression and slavery to political independence. English literature has been a means for Indians to give form and expression to hopes and despair, to enthusiasm and apathy, to the excitement of joy, and to the throes of pain, in the history of the nation as it moved from slavery to revolution, from revolution to independence, and from independence to the ardent tasks of reconstruction. A Time to be Happy by Nayantara Sahgal, Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand, waiting for the Mahatma by R.K. Narayan, Inquilaab by K.A. Abbas, and others are some examples of Indian writings in English that center on the theme of the independence struggle and the effects of the freedom movement in post-independent India.

1.2.2. Social Realism:

The representation of social issues in order to promote social transformation was one of the key themes of Indian writings at that time in English. Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable," "Coolie," and "Two Leaves and a Bud," R.K. Narayan's "Swami and Friend," "The Dark Room," Raja Rao's "Kanthapura," "The Serpent and the Rope," and "The Cow of the Barricades," G. V. Desai's "All About Hatter," Bhabani Bhattacharya's "So Many Hunger,"

The Indian society was portrayed in these works, with a focus on the average man rather than the elite and the sophisticated, who preferred the comfortable to the fancy and wandered the same roads as the outcasts, peasants, and workers. The publications of this time period comprehensively cover a variety of social reform-related topics, including the

exploitation of the untouchables, landless peasants, tea garden laborers, and issues with industrial labor (Banerjee 3).

1.2.3 Indian Diaspora and Immigration:

Immigrants who left their home countries in search of new horizons are a significant component of this era's societal issues. The majority of authors and academics used writing to convey their issues and experiences in English. Their major concern is the predicament of immigrants from India who are stuck between two cultures. They provoke thoughts of home, their own experiences with rootlessness, issues with adaptations, denial, repression, rage, identity crisis, resistance, humiliation, and moral challenges. *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Desirable Daughters*, *The Tree Bride*, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*, and *Unaccustomed Earth* by Bharti Mukherjee, and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai all fall under this heading. This group of Indian English writers portrays the internal conflict that immigrants who want to settle in a foreign nation have experienced. According to Banerjee:

A cultural encounter that combines the rewriting of history with nuanced responses to marginalization and displacement by hegemonic forces is evident in contemporary South Asian Diaspora writing. In place of the raw intensity of first-generation politics, a more sophisticated reaction to racial and ethnic concerns has emerged. The new authors respond to their attempted marginalization by crafting their own voices rather than blending in with the mainstream.

The Serpent and the Rope by Raja Rao, *The Nowhere Man* by Kamala Markandaya, and *Some Inner Rage* are three examples of Indian writers that explored the issue of East-West encounters and highlighted the interplay between Oriental and Occidental people and cultures in their English-language works (Banerjee).

1.2.4. Individual Issues:

The search for identity, alienation, rootlessness, meaninglessness, and the human dilemma is only a few of the particular concerns and problems that certain Indian English authors have addressed extensively and deeply in their writing. These authors have written *The Foreigner* by Arun Joshi, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and *Apprentice*, *Journey to Ithaca* and *Fire on the*

Mountain by Anita Desai, Confessions of an Indian Woman by Shastri Brata, Easter and She and He by Saros Cowsjee, Goodbye to Elsa by Saros Cowsjee, and The Bone's Prayer by Shiv K Kumar. Therefore, the themes of social change, the Indian Diaspora, the east-west encounter, the decay of values, and existential concerns were pushed by the second generation of Indian English authors.

1.2.5. Feminism and Women's Empowerment:

The rise of a feminist or woman-centered approach, which attempts to project and interpret experience from a feminine awareness and sensibility, is an important trend in contemporary Indian English literature. Modern Indian literature is characterized by the depiction of the plight of educated middle-class Indian women, their search for identity, concerns with parent-child relationships, marriage, and sex, as well as their exploitation. Such essays capture the struggle of today's modern women to discover and preserve their confidence. This topic has gained a lot of attention in large part from English authors. Women in post-independent India have come to understand the value of defining who they are and what they contribute to society and the environment as a result of social and cultural changes. The female protagonists in these works struggle mightily to escape restrictive, traditional norms. The quest for identification among women was a favorite subject for many Indian English authors. Feminist thinking and political movements in the West influenced the movement of women in emerging nations like India. Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kamala Das, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Nayantara Sahgal and Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai are a few of the well-known authors in Indian English literature who changed the meaning of feminism (Narayan).

1.2.6. Modern Themes:

Themes like as industrialization, urbanization, globalization, modernization, feminism, women's empowerment, and shifting social dynamics are among the most important ones addressed by contemporary Indian English writers. The Midnight Children by Salman Rushdie, The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor, The Circle of Reason by Amitav Ghosh, An Angel in Pyjamas by Tabish Kher, Red Earth by Vikram Chandra, The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga, The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai, and The Golden Gate by Vikram Seth are a few examples.

1.3. Myth in Indian English Literature:

According to Joseph Strelka of New York State University, Albany, and his article Myth/Myth:

Many literary works serve as excellent examples of the revitalization of myth. No less worthy of note, it is often a myth that gives power and vitality to some of the greatest works of literature.” (Strelka, Myth/Myth)

Several notable authors of postcolonial Indian English literature and prose used Indian mythology and legends in their works; Raja Rao is one example of a writer who highlighted the myth's emotional, metaphorical, historical, and symbolic appeal in *The Serpent and the Shakespeare*. In actuality, it is extremely evident and noticeable that Indian mythology is making a comeback in contemporary popular literature and prose. Today India has seen a rise in the popularity of Indian English literature. Among today's Indian readers, especially young adults, several Indian writers and diasporic authors of Indian descent have produced prose and fiction that has piqued their attention and been incredibly well-liked. mish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, and Devdutt Pattnaik, among others, have achieved great recognition as a result of their books and works including Indian myth, which has given rise to an entirely new genre of writings about Indian mythology and stories that has ignited the book industry. One of the enlivening components of Indian culture is its mythology, which makes it distinctive across the world.

In civilization, myth plays an important role and frequently consists of narratives of god. A traditional tale describing natural or social phenomena natural or social phenomena or relating the early history of a people, generally featuring supernatural beings or occurrences, belongs to the folklore genre of myth. Mythology is the study of legends. The mythological foundations opened up new horizons for writing all around the world. Epic, lyric poetry, theatre, history, and other tales are literary genres that have influenced mythological literature. By its subject, mythology may be approached in the simplest and most straightforward way possible. We can define myth in a larger sense as traditional tales about gods, monarchs, the origin of the universe, the real meaning of human life, and much more. The relationship between humanity and god is portrayed in mythology, which also gives us a set of ethical principles to live by. Myths are well-known stories that represent accumulated knowledge and have been handed down the generations as

grandmother tales. While certain myths may have been created by shamans, priests, or poets, myths are a cultural legacy of prehistoric or prescientific humans (Rathi).

As extensive as Indian mythology is, a lot of individuals all over the world have been influenced by it. This is most likely a result of the fact that mythology and Indian religion are intertwined like two sides of the same coin.

Several German and American Romantic poets started showing a strong interest in Indian poetry and literature by the 19th century. However, by the 20th century, several Westerners had developed an interest in Indian philosophy and literature. One such person was T. S. Eliot, who studied Sanskrit at Harvard and devoted a substantial portion of his epic poem *The Waste Land* to showcasing Indian ideas.

Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg traveled to India because of Buddhism. After staying there as a member of Mexico's diplomatic mission, Mexican poet and author Octavio Paz became intensely and permanently interested in Indian poetry (and as ambassador in the 1960s). In addition to writing extensively on India, he translated Sanskrit Kavya. The Australian poet Colin Dean, who is listed in the Australian Literature Resource database, has a passion for Indian philosophy and literature, and as a result, he has written a number of poems with Indian themes, including mythology, traditional Sanskrit plays, philosophy, folktales, and poetry that has been translated from Sanskrit (HAIIOU and GHRIB).

Several Western philosophers were also affected by Indian mythology, and this may be seen in their writings. Being the most favored and frequently utilized genre in Indian writing, mythology has long been the most affecting aspect that has kept readers under its influence for generations.

Beginning with the Vedic Era, Indian writers have been affected by the topic of mythology, which is all-encompassing and all-inclusive in nature and has a traditional and standard point of view. Hence, mythological themes and topics are other common features of Indian literature, including one's everyday life and love of reading. In particular, the epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata have drawn heavily on mythical themes.

The Vedic Puranas or the Upanishads supported Indian literature by depicting mythological themes in every single line and rhythm. The Puran with its almost epic-like plot and the depiction of the different strata of society that exist, as well as the side-by-side dwelling of humans, gods,

and demons, always make the present age wonders. Some well-known works illustrate how Indian literature has been dominated by Hindu mythology. Innovative ways have been used to retell lesser-known mythological tales in order to engage readers. The authors talked about the undiscovered meanings in the epic and mythic episodes from a contemporary perspective. The myth and traditional storytelling forms and styles made a vital contribution to the resuscitation of culture and the function of the myth as a sociable uniting force.

Indian authors Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and Bankim Chandra as a literary device for expressing people's social, political, medical, and modern difficulties and challenges, R K Narayan focused on allusions to Hindu mythology. The Indian myth is represented differently in each genre of Indian writing in English. Hindu mythology has been cleverly symbolized by poets like Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, and Kamala Das, and writers like Ambedkar, Narayan, and Girish Karnard in their works.

Indian mythological topics are abundantly represented in Vedic literature. Indeed, the Vedic Era is when all the Hindu gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Agni, Vayu, Surya, Varuna, or Indrahad first appeared. The four Vedas—Rigveda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda—are also known to include numerous stories of courage, bravery, carnage, invasions, and heroic actions that could only be found in legendary writings, adding more splendor to Indian literature's mythological themes. The topics from mythology are extensively used in modern Indian writing. With its extensive upfront of moral lessons and stories, this specific genre captivated generations and frequently encouraged them to use mythology as a backdrop for their writing. Amitav Gosh, Salman Rushdie, Arundathi Roy, and other contemporary authors have presented very diverse interpretations of mythology (Iyengar).

1.4. Symbolism in Indian English Literature:

Symbolism is a literary movement that appeared during the nineteenth century, which gave a further interest to the use of symbols in literary texts. It is a literary technique wherein the application of symbols that are usually a common object, person, animal, event, action, or place which join an extra significance in addition to its literal meaning. A lot of literary writers use symbols in order to express themselves and to convey their messages because an author's

experience cannot be accurately portrayed without using special techniques such as symbolism. Thus, writers code meanings by applying symbols, which usually are needed to interpret when consuming the text (BAKADI and ZAHOUANI).

In terms of symbolism and realism, Indian literature essentially portrays the whole of India and all of its facets. mythology and folklore have had a significant impact on Indian writing from prehistoric times, and as a result, many of the ideas and subjects are just reflections of those. Hindu ideals that predominate in literature can be generally classified as religious, spiritual, cultural, romantic, and philosophical notions. As a result, there are differences between the views expressed in the Vedic, medieval, and contemporary eras. The majority of these concepts are introduced into the works "as symbols or as implicit allusions," which must be identified and examined in connection to their origins in order to fully understand the text's meaning. One frequent symbol utilized in Hindu texts is the lotus. It refers to the highest truth, the muse of knowledge, beauty, and non-attachment that is mentioned in Hindu scriptures' philosophical works. Through symbolism, concepts like purushartha, righteousness, artha, kama, moksha, rebirth, soul, and detachment find a home in contemporary works from these same sources (Shulman).

For readers to understand their connection to the eternal, mythological figures and events such as Pandavas, Kauravas, gods and goddesses, the Kurukshetra war, the game of dice, aswamedhayagam, caste system, nature worship, illusion, pantheism, and incarnations of Vishnu, among others, are woven throughout the writings. Different trees, deity figures, fire, snakes, water, mountains, particularly the Himalayas, the sky, temples, swords, etc. are a few of the often-used symbols that have been employed throughout history. The primary concepts that are represented include gods in particular (polytheism), who are for people who require a concrete representation (elements of nature), and the Formless One, who is for those who have complete confidence. The many social customs, the four phases (ashrams) of a man's life, and the previously listed components all provide a clear link to Hinduism's origins.

Throughout the era of colonialism, symbolism portrays the inner workings of Indian civilization. The complexity between the two various civilizations is also made clear by it. The conflict between Indian and British societies, both internal and foreign, is also discussed. Forster based his book on the conflicts between many characters' social, cultural, psychological, and political ideologies.

Forster reflects literary meaning via objects and symbols using a variety of modernist literary techniques, including symbols, imagery, alliteration, and personification.

The study is conducted in order to achieve certain objectives. It firstly tends to highlight the main symbols that are employed in Divakaruni's novel *The Mistress of Spices* and to analyze them. In addition, it aims to explore the purpose behind using symbolism in the novel.

1.4.1. Definitions of Symbolism:

The diction "symbolism" means the use of symbols to represent things (Oxford Dictionary). Starting from this definition, symbolism is rooted in the history of human beings; because symbols are used since the first human utterance. Arthur Symons; in *Literary Symbolism* by Maurice Beebe, claims: "Symbolism began with the first words uttered by the first man, as he named every living thing; or before them, in heaven, when God named the world into being." As a literary movement, symbolism refers to a tendency in literature; which is characterized by the wide implication of symbols in literary works. According to Cuddon states, "A symbolism is an object, animate, which represents something else" (cuddon,885).

The literary device that a writer or poet utilizes to create a rich environment and enable deeper study and interpretation of a literary work is known as symbolism in literature. Writers have interpreted the literary meaning in the story by using symbols as a text's aesthetic device. Literary symbols should be explained within the text itself, not outside of it.

Symbolism appeared first in French during the late of nineteenth century. It was founded by a large group of authors who were famous in that period, like; Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Their literature was a reaction against the Realistic and Naturalistic currents of literature. English literature, was then, influenced by the movement and spread into England thanks to the book of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* by Arthur Symons (BAKADI and ZEHOUANI).

Symbolism is a literary technique used in literature to provide additional meaning and help the reader in understanding a piece of writing. In literature, different symbols are frequently used by authors to illustrate a certain idea. The following symbols may be employed in many literary genres to give a tale significance. Objects are given a meaning that is distinct from their original meaning

or function when symbols are utilized in the literature. The use of metaphor, allegory, and allusion, among other literary strategies, contribute to the development of symbolism.

The usage of symbols by authors helps them connect little details with more overarching ideas. Symbolism is the use of words or pictures to represent certain ideas, characters, things, or events. It's important to note that the symbols being utilized here are metaphorical or inferred, rather than literal, representations. Using the picture of a butterfly to introduce a personal essay on metamorphosis, for instance.

1.4.2 Types of Symbolism

A writer can utilize symbolism to express a meaning that is broader or an idea not explicitly stated in a text. The idea and its development can be shown in this way to the readers. Symbolism adds depth and makes a piece more interesting to read, as the reader may have to decipher the meaning.

Usually, a symbol most of the time occurs repeatedly, and this emphasizes the intent of the writer, making it readily identifiable as a symbol versus a mere description.

These types of symbolism are respective to different genres of literature. Common types of symbolism include:

Religious Symbolism

Religious symbolism is the use of symbols, including archetypes, acts, artwork, events, or natural phenomena, by a religion. Religions view religious texts, rituals, and works of art as symbols of compelling ideas or ideals. Symbols help create a resonant mythos expressing the moral values of the society or the teachings of the religion, foster. There are many religious symbolisms based on different religions. Some of them are: Islamic Symbolism, Hindu Symbolism, Christian Symbolism, Buddha Symbolism, Judaism Symbolism, Polytheism Symbolism, Mithraism mysteries Symbolism, Sikh Symbolism, Universal Symbolism.

Socio-cultural Symbolism

Social Symbolism recognized that the constant in art, culture to culture, worldwide, and throughout history, has been the use of symbolism. This symbolism has always been interactive

with the mythology of the culture in which it was produced, although not necessarily limited to it. In different ways, it exists at the intersection of the mundane and the fantastic, where gods and men may, or may not, encounter each other on any given occasion.

Religious symbolism

Religious symbolism is when we use well-known symbols to represent something in a godly context. Snakes are viewed as full of deceit in the Bible, as the devil tricks Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent. It is the use of symbols, including archetypes, acts, artwork, events, or natural phenomena, by a religion. Religions view religious texts, rituals, and works of art as symbols of compelling ideas or ideals. Symbols help us to create a resonant mythos expressing the moral values of the society or the teachings of the religion, foster solidarity among adherents, and bring adherents closer to their object of worship.

1.5. Magical Realism in Indian English Literature:

With its introduction into the field of surreal art and subsequent use by the Latin American novelist Jorge Luis Borges, the term "magic realism" has been applied fairly freely in the literary world. This phrase, which is borrowed from several others, is frequently used to refer to literature that is mystical or fantastical and originates from the troubled countries of Latin America. What exactly is "magic realism," and why is it used by college lecturers, reviewers, and aspiring fiction authors to categorize their own works? Is it a certain genre? A fashion?

Franz Roh, a painter and art critic who lived and worked in Germany in the 1920s, created the term "Magic Realism." Subsequently, this phrase was adopted by writers from Central America, such as Alejo and Carpentier, in their writings throughout the 1940s. Then, in 1955, Latin American Writers Angel Flores and Gabriel Garcia Marquez utilized the term, which finally attracted international notice. Although the phrase later gained popularity in Europe, it revolutionized Latin America. As a result, literary art forms are influenced by all eras. Ritu Sharma, "A Study in Comparative and The Contrast of the Protagonists in Vikram Chandra's Red Earth in Pouring Rain and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children."

Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, and Kiran Desai are three authors who helped popularize the term "magical realism" in Indo-Anglian literature. More than a hundred different languages are utilized in India as a medium of communication due to their diverse language heritage. The British occupation of India is what led to the dominance of English in Indian literature. The English language has become the most dominant of all the vernacular languages as a result of British corporations' over 200 years of hegemonic rule over India.

The old few years have brought attention to the global landscape of India and the Indian Novelists. Salman Rushdie is a pioneer in redefining the subjects, styles, and fashions of Indian literature in English. *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, published in 1981, has come to represent the genre for later authors. Surprisingly, the finest narrative technique in the novel was the oldest kind of storytelling. This book had a variety of subjects, including those related to magic realism (which is also allegorical, symbolic, and sardonic), politics, religion, myth, and mythology. It also included flawless language that is vibrant and alive and was considered a classic text (in its adequacy, and strength). It holds the level of seriousness that can compel intellectuals' attention and also maintain interest. This novel is an example of a combo of entertainment, carrying all the basic elements within it. This novel is a recorder of human beauty, strength, and universality-eternal.

1.5.1. Definitions of Magical Realism:

A literary esthetic style or genre of literature known as "magic realism" combines magical elements with a realistic setting in order to gain a greater understanding of reality. These magical components are explained as normal occurrences which are presented in a straightforward way that allows acceptance of the 'real' and the 'fantastic' in the same train of thought. To fully comprehend the subject at hand, it would be helpful to look over a few definitions of magic realism.

Mathew Stretcher has defined magic realism as: "What happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something "too strange to believe". (Stretcher)

Erwin Dale Carter brings a very simple and comprehensive definition of magic realism in the following words:

First, it is the combination of reality and fantasy and second, it is the transformation of the real into the awesome and unreal. Thirdly an art of surprises, one which creates a distorted

concept of time and space. Fourth literature is directed to an intellectual minority characterized by a cold cerebral aloofness it does not cater to popular tastes, but rather to that of those sophisticated individuals instructed in aesthetic subtleties. (Flores)

While the American Heritage Dictionary has illustrated, “magic realism is a chiefly style of originating in Latin America that combines the fantastic or dreamlike elements with reality”, The Oxford Companion has defined it elaborately in the following words;

Magic Realist novels and stories have, typically, a strong narrative drive, in which the recognizably realistic mingles with the unaccepted and the inexplicable, and in which elements of dream, fairy story, or mythology combined with every day, often in a mosaic or kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence.

Angel Flores also gives a concept similar to that aesthetic literary genre.

In magical realism, we find the transformation of the common and everyday into the awesome and the unreal. It is predominantly an art of surprises. Time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality. Once the reader accepts the fact accomplished, the rest follows with logical precision (Flores)

Magic realism is a literary fact that is connected to a writing technique or style which integrates mystical or supernatural phenomena into realistic narratives without challenging the impossibility of events. This confluence of truth and fiction is supposed to question the nature of reality and draw attention to the act of creation.

The power of a magic realistic text to create a literary environment that must be filled with local folklore, cultural beliefs, geography, history, and political events is one of the book's most impressive qualities. As a result, although the text's setting appears to be quite genuine, the actual events seem either impossible or just unthinkable. While other events are ongoing, slaves receive assistance from the dead, humans turn into animals, time travels backward, and so on. A novel that uses magic realistically gives readers an overview of a world where nothing is taken for granted.

Magic Realism also incorporates outer and internal components of human existence, mixing empirical and emotional physical reality. It consists of aspects of human existence including

thoughts, feelings, dreams, and imagination. This combination enables magical realism to reflect human nature more truthfully.

1.5.2 Characteristics of Magic Realism:

The following list covers specific characteristics of magic realist works. These characteristics may vary between different writers' works. Even if not all of them can be found in one text, some of them can be found. The features mentioned can also be used to evaluate literary works from a magic realism perspective. These features are as follows:

Hybridity:

One of the most common characteristics of magical realism is hybridity. The major goal of this technique is to assist the writer in creating a consistent blurring of time boundaries. It also makes it easier for the author to add a narrative voice to the text. Its main purpose is to use several realities that take place in dissonant arenas of opposites such as urban and rural, western and indigenous. The themes of borders, blending, and transformation are present in the plots of magical realistic works. Such plots are designed to reveal a key goal of magical realism: a deeper and more accurate depiction of reality than would be possible with ordinary realistic methods.

Fantastical Elements:

Magical realism is considered a modern fictional style with fantastical narrative elements. Despite being fantastic, it consistently adopts a tone of objective, realistic reporting. The phrase "To move beyond realism's boundaries" expresses the modern novel's tendency in an obvious way. Fable, folktale, and myth techniques and strategies are used to preserve contemporary social significance. One strategy used by magic realism is to grant characters fantastical abilities like levitation, flight, telepathy, and telekinesis.

Metafiction:

The reader's role in literature is addressed by this characteristic. In addition to its many realities, unique relationship to the reader's imagination, it explores the effect of fiction on fact, fact on fiction and the role of the reader in between, it is so important to call attention to social and political criticism.

Authorial Reticence:

It refers to the characters' inability to communicate convincing viewpoints on the veracity of their worldviews and the effectiveness of the events in the narrative. Authorial reticence, in the words of Chandy, is the deliberate withholding of information and explanations regarding the unsettling fictional universe. (Chandy). The narrator is not allowed to elaborate on the truthfulness or veracity of the incidents or opinions discussed in the text. The lack of amazing explanations by the narrator makes him even more disdainful, and the story continues with "logical precision" as if nothing unexpected occurred. Acceptance of magic realism is facilitated by this strategy. In magical realism, the simple act of explaining the supernatural would remove its position of equality regarding a reader's conventional view of reality because it would then be less valid, and the supernatural realm would be disregarded as a false testimony.

Sense of Mystery:

one of magic realism's strongest characteristics. A magical realistic work does not fit traditional narrative form, plot advancement, or linear time structure, almost every critic concedes. Instead, it moves back and backward in time along with the narration, which is full of diversions. Before concluding the first event and leaving the readers in the mystery of the earlier events, the narrator moves straight on to another event. This is the sensation of mystery that permeates the entire text for the reader.

Political Critique:

Magic realist writings typically take place in a certain historical, political, and cultural context. Implicit critique of society and the elite in particular can be found in magic realism. This is largely a mode about and for the eccentrics: the economically, socially, and geographically marginalized. As a result, magical realist literature attempts to fix the reality of accepted ideas (such as realism, naturalism, and modernism). According to this reasoning, magic realist texts are subversive and revolutionary against socially dominant forces.

The Supernatural and Natural:

The supernatural isn't presented to be questionable in magic realism. While the reader realizes that rational and irrational polarities are opposing and in conflict, they are not perplexed. They are not confused since the supernatural is incorporated into the narrator's perceptual norms and characters in the fictional world.

Role of Inexplicable:

The unfathomable, including coincidences, serendipity, consequentialism, poetic justice, or divine justice; extraordinary or marvelous talents, beings, or events; and premonitions, omens, and prophecies, is what distinguishes magical realism from other genres. The notion of magic realism depends on how the characters respond to the strange: Incredibly commonplace events are the setting for puzzling happenings, and the characters sometimes fail to acknowledge the supernatural or magical aspect of the event. Instead, they frequently view the wonderful event as an inconvenience, a setback, or an unwelcome duty. In fact, this approach to the paranormal sets Magic Realism apart from other, more conventional, portrayals of magical phenomena in literary fiction. Additionally, it's what lends Magic Realism its distinctively sardonic and funny tone.

1.6 Diaspora in Indian Literature:

The word "diaspora" derives from the Greek word "dispersion," which means "to sow or disperse seeds" and means "across." It is based on the Hebrew term for exile and dispersion, "galut." (that is from the Holy Land). (Britannica the new encyclopedia)

The term "diaspora" describes any ethnic community that is forced, enticed, or coerced to leave behind its original ethnic background, had been spread over the world, and consequent shifts in its dispersion and culture. The term "Diaspora" was previously derived from this definition. This includes a variety of racial and ethnic groupings as well as other types of people, including politicians, refugees from conflict, immigrants, expatriates, and members of transnational communities. According to Steven Vertovec (1999) "Diaspora" is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialized' or 'transnational' - that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of the nation-states or, indeed span the globe. (Vertovec)

In summary, the term "diaspora" refers to people and communities who have left their home countries due to colonial expansion, imperialism, trade, business, better opportunities, a desire for better futures, and globalization. These people are separated from their home countries through migration, immigration, or exile.

1.6.1. Definition of Diaspora:

A simple definition of diaspora literature, then, would be works that are written by authors who live outside their native land. The term identifies a work's distinctive geographic origins. But diaspora literature may also be defined by its contents, regardless of where it was written.

The chief characteristic features of diasporic writings are the quest for identity, uprooting and re-rooting, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, a nagging sense of guilt, etc. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons. For eg. Naipaul who is in a perpetual quest for his roots turns to India for the same.

The writers of the Indian diaspora, through their literary contributions, have greatly enriched English literature. They have been aiming at re-inventing India through the rhythms of ancient legends, the cadences of mythology, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation, and nostalgia.

This literature works as a channel to strengthen the bonds between the different states of India and India in relation to the other countries at large. The diasporic opinion helps to break through the past alienation and isolation which caused much injustice and abuse of human rights. Robin Cohen classifies Diaspora as : 1. Victim Diasporas 2. Labour Diasporas 3. Imperial Diasporas 4. Trade Diasporas 5. Homeland Diasporas 6. Cultural Diasporas The author finds a common element in all forms of Diaspora; these are people who live outside their 'natal (or imagined natal) territories' (ix) and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, the religion they adopt, and cultures they produce. Each of the categories of Diasporas underlines a particular cause of migration usually associated with particular groups of people. So, for example, the Africans through their experience of slavery have been noted to be victims of extremely aggressive transmigration of all policies (Mishra).

1.6.2. Characteristics of Diaspora:

Several scholars, such as William Safran and Robin Cohen, have put together a list of the diaspora's distinctive traits. In "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return," William Safran defines "Diaspora" as an expatriate community that shares a number of characteristics. The most important among them are:

- 1) Their own or their ancestors' dispersion from a specific homeland to another country or place.
- 2) Retention of collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland.
- 3) Experience a feeling of alienation and antagonism from the host society and the feeling that they can never fit in.
- 4) Regarding the ancestral homeland as their true home and their sojourn as temporary, with the hope that they or their descendants would someday return.
- 5) Treasuring the collective past.
- 6) Commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland. (Safran)

Robin Cohen's defining common characteristics of the diaspora are as follows:

- 1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
- 2) The expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade, or to further colonial ambitions.
- 3) A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering, and achievements.
- 4) An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity.
- 5) The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland.
- 6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage, and the belief in a common fate.

- 7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggests a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
- 8) A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where the home has become more vestigial.
- 9) A possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (Global Diaspora 17).

Conclusion:

Today, Indian English literature is well-known all over the world. Several writers have explored it in various literary works. The most helpful topics, approaches, tactics, and genres were demonstrated by these literary works, which also gave rise to a number of notable individuals, including Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Dessai, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Chitra Banerjee Divacaruni, and others. Myth and Symbolism, which were both unique methods or strategies that distinguished Indian English literature, are mentioned in this chapter.

The next chapters will discuss a well-known book of Indian English literature and emphasize its use of myth and symbolism.

Chapter Two

Thematic Overview and Symbolism

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Introduction

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Chapter Two: Thematic Overview and Symbolism

Introduction:

As an Indian American author, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni attracts readers from all over the world. Her first book, *The Mistress of Spices*, along with *The Sister of My Heart* and Most Recently, *The Palace of Illusion*, all contributed to her increasing popularity. She is regarded as one of the most well-known writers of Indian descent as a result.

The book is currently the most significant and widely used literary form. *The Mistress of Spices*, which has a 2005 film adaptation of the same name, is the only literary work that can compete for popularity with film and radio. Several topics are examined throughout the book. It is a fascinating description of the protagonist Tilo's journey from consciousness to self-discovery, and it explores questions of culture, identity, and the experience of immigrants and the diaspora. Tilo chooses the spice path to self-discovery; the spices communicate with her and guide her throughout the story.

This part will introduce Chitra's life, her works, her style of writing... etc

2.1. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Biography



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American author, poet, and Betty and Gene McDavid Professor of Writing at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program, She was born on July 29, 1956. Her 1995 American Book Award-winning short story collection *Arranged Marriage*, two of her novels (*The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*), and the short story "*The Word Love*" were all made into movies. The Orange Prize shortlist included *Mistress of Spices*. Currently, *Sister of My Heart*, *Oleander Girl*, *Palace of Illusions*, and *One Amazing Thing* have all been optioned to be made into movies or TV series. Works of Chitra are largely set in India and the United States, and most of the time focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children and adults. She has published novels in multiple genres, including magical realism, realistic fiction, historical fiction, myth, and fantasy (Roy).

work of Divakaruni has been published in over 50 magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, and her writing has been included in over 50 anthologies including the Best American Short Stories, the O. Henry Prize Stories, and the Pushcart Prize anthology. Her fiction has been translated into 29 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Indonesian, Bengali, Turkish, and Japanese. Divakaruni started her writing career as a poet. Her two latest volumes of poetry are *Black Candle* and *Leaving Yuba City*. She gained many different awards for her poems, such as a Gerbode Award, a Barbara Deming Memorial Award, and an Allen Ginsberg Award. Her first collection of stories *Arranged Marriage*, which won an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles Award, and a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, greatly increased her visibility. Divakaruni's major novels include *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Queen of Dreams*, *One Amazing Thing*, *Palace of Illusions*, *Oleander Girl*, and *Before We Visit the Goddess*. Although the biggest part of her novels is written for adults, she has also written a young adult fantasy series called *The Brotherhood of the Conch* which, unlike many of her adult novels, takes place totally in India and draws on the culture and folklore of that area.

2.1.1. Chitra Banerjee's Life

The Indian-American novelist and poet Chitra was born in Calcutta, India. Rajendra Kumar Banerjee is her father, he was an accountant and Tatini Banerjee is her mother, she was a school teacher. Chitra's childhood name was Chitra Lekha Banerjee. She had three brothers their names are - Partha, Dhurva, and Surya. Her late grandpa had a huge impact on Chitra's life. He loved Chitra so much and told her many stories, especially from Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

She is also the one who belongs to the postcolonial era constantly plunging around that intangible moment in which individuals accept their histories, move away from their native place, try to fix their roots in a strange locality, and free themselves from the rhetorical burden of circumstance they encounter in their life (Rathiga,2015). As an Indian immigrant to the United States of America, Chitra tries to break free from stereotypes and uses her past experiences and the desire to communicate the plight of Indian women in America, as the driving force behind her writing. Her writings constitute an attempt to reconnect her, emotionally and physically to her immigrant status. She has explored the force of tradition of her native country as well as the challenges faced by the immigrants in her adopted country.

Chitra's artwork is reflected in the environment of her paintings by her memories of the dark, rural hamlet of her grandparents. Her fantastic tales are infused with eternally well-known Indian Epic stories.

Divakaruni's grandpa taught her the art of storytelling. She established that kind of literature as the mistress of magical realism in her series of works. Up until 1971, she attended Loreto House, an Irish nun-run convent school. She was completely inspired by Mother Teresa and her works for the poor, ill, orphaned, and deprived. She earned an English Literature degree from Kolkatta University in 1976. She came from a middle-class Bengali family. She developed features that are appropriate for traditional Indian families as a result of her comprehension of Indian culture and traditions.

After receiving her diploma, she made the decision to continue her education in the US. Chitra's traditional Bengali family first hesitated to fulfill her wish, but after seeing that she had excelled in school from an early age, they agreed to let her go—but only if she traveled with her older brother, who had previously lived in Ohio. When she was just 19 years old in 1976, she immigrated to the country. She attended Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, where she pursued a master's degree in English literature in 1978.

She needed to make money to pay for her studies. She first worked in a bakery, then she washed instruments at a research facility, and eventually, she was a merchandiser. She even worked as a babysitter. Furthermore, in order to continue her Ph.D. studies at the University of California at Berkeley, she lived in the international house of Berkeley and worked in its dining hall cleaning dishes. She also resided at the Berkeley International House while working as a dishwashing assistant while completing her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. Since 1979, Chitra had been married to S. Murthy Divakaruni of Andhra Pradesh, India. She lived for a long time in Sunnyvale, California, with her husband and their two kids, Anand and Abhay. At the University of California, Divakaruni completed her Ph.D. in 1985. She felt extremely rootless, nostalgic, and deprived as an immigrant in the United States. The search for her own identity began, and as her personality developed over time, she gradually came to understand the importance of cultural distinctions. She was motivated to consider what was appropriate to adopt and what was not by the United States serving as her host nation. In the context of cultural conflicts, she shared these experiences using the voice of immigrant women. In an interview, Divakaruni stated that:

"Immigration in my case makes me into a writer. It gives me a subject to write about. It gives me a whole different focus for looking back at my home culture, but also for looking at this new world in which I find myself, everything is so different!" (Basu).

Chitra began to take writing more seriously; she participated in a school for creative writing and joined Berkeley with a literary group. Divakaruni has been writing since she was a little child, both for her personal pleasure and consolation and, as an immigrant, to express her disapproval of how Americans treat immigrants. Her creative works successfully express her nostalgia for India. She even taught creative writing and English Literature at Diablo Valley College. With the assistance of a group of poets she joined in Berkeley, the first collection of her poems, *Dark Like the River*, was published in 1987. She then released *The Reason for Nasturtiums*, another collection of her poetry, in 1990. After her second anthology was released, she got a job as a professor at Foothill College in Los Altos, California.

In addition, Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, and a number of Indian-American authors including Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, etc. served as inspiration for Chitra. Their themes of immigration, changing women's roles, myths, identity crises, and second-generation immigrant lives, among others, had an impact on her (Chakravarti).

2-1-2 Chitra Banerjee's Major works

A) Fiction and poetry

The writings of Divakaruni have been published in more than 50 magazines and 50 anthologies, including *Best American Short Stories*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *Henry Tales Prize Stories*, and *The Pushcart Award Anthology*. Additionally, 29 languages—including Dutch, Hebrew, Indonesian, Bengali, Turkish, and Japanese—have translated her works.

Fiction:

- *Arranged Marriage: Stories (1995)*
- *The Mistress of Spices (1997)*
- *Sister of My Heart (1999)*

- *The Vine of Desire* (2002)
- *Queen of Dreams* (2004)
- *The Lives of Strangers* (2007)
- *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* (2008)
- *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019)

Poetry:

- *Mr. Aryan Yadav*, 1987
- *The Reason for Nasturtiums, Berkeley (Berkeley Poets Workshop) 1990. Black Candle. Poems About Women from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, Corvallis (Calyx Books) 1991*
- *Leaving Yuba City, St. Louis (Turtleback Books) 1997. (Patel)*

B) Film, Television, Theater and Opera

As film adaptations reveal the success of any literary work. We discuss Chitra's novel *The Mistress of Spices* as a film that was released in 2005. It was directed by Paul Mayeda Berges, with a script by Berges and his wife, Gurinder Chadha. The Protagonists of that film are Aishwarya Rai and Dylan McDermott.

Additionally, Suhasini Maniratnam adapted her book *Sister of My Heart* into a Tamil television series, which was broadcast in India as *Anbulla Snegithiye (Loving Friend)*.

The producers NR Pachisia and Dipankar Jojo Chaki obtained the rights to adapt *The Palace of Illusions* for the big screen in 2018.

In 2004, her story *Clothes* from the collection *Arranged Marriage* was adapted into a play under the title *Arranged Marriage* by Peggy Shannon "at the Sacramento Theatre Company.

The libretto for the chamber opera *River of Light*, showing the life of an Indian woman in Houston, was written by Divakaruni in 2013 for the Houston Grand Opera. It had its world premiere in 2014 at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center with original music by Jack Perla, and it was presented there once more in 2015 by Festival Opera under the direction of Tanya Kane-Parry.

Under Joe Disabatino's direction, a play based on The Palace of Illusions called Fire and Ice: Draupadi's Story was performed in India. (Aishwarya)

C) Anthologies

- *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers (1993)*
- *California Uncovered: tales for the 21st Century (2004) (Patel)*
- *We Too Sing America (1997)*

Divakaruni clarified her reason for writing saying: “There is a certain spirituality, not necessarily religious -the essence of spirituality- that is at the heart of the Indian psyche that finds the divine in everything. It was important for me to start writing about my own reality and that of my community” (Doubleday).

2.1.3. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Literature Style

Chitra, one of several Diasporic Indian writers, flourished as a talented novelist. Her work includes discussions of myth, cultural conflict, the experience of Indians, history, magic realism, and other subjects. Chitra's best-selling book *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) is written in a unique style that combines prose and poetry, magic and reality.

By combining mysticism, romance, and realism, Divakaruni transports us into a world as complex and sensual as the spices she speaks about. In an effort to construct a contemporary fairytale, Divakaruni said that her book *Mistress of Spices* as "was written in a spirit of play, collapsing the divisions between the realistic world of twentieth-century America and timeless one of myth."

2.2. Plot Summary:

The novel contains fifteen chapters. The first chapter is titled "Tilo." Tilo plays an important role in the story, in fact. The first line of the chapter is, "I am a Mistress of Spices. The heroine, Tilo, was given the name NAYAN TARA at birth and was the third daughter in her lower-class family. She was given ass milk as a newborn, which aided in her developing her sight and vocabulary more quickly than other children. Due to her parents' negligence, she lived a life that was exceedingly reckless. When she realized her unknown powers and helped the villagers in solving their problems and finding their lost things, she was given luxurious presents as a matter

of gratitude. She has grown proud and willful, even the family members enjoyed the luxurious life by her. But this does not last long, her fame spreads far and wide. Once when she was a child the pirates kidnapped her, killed her parents, and destroyed the village with fire, so as to gain more and more riches with her exotic powers, then she became the Queen of Pirates. One day the Serpents told her about the Island of Spices, the place where if she reached would lose everything, sight, voice, name, and perhaps self. So, she jumped into the ocean hoping to reach the Island of Spices. In the morning she opened her eyes she found First Mother and her novices. She did not remember her past. Here under the guidance of the First Mother, she renames herself TILOTTAMA. Tilo passed the ceremony of purification i.e., entering the Shampati's fire.

The first time you enter the shampati's fire - you will not burn; you will not feel pain and you will wake in your new body as though it has been yours forever – a body that has lost its youth and taken on age and ugliness and unending service. (Divakaruni)

A mistress's existence would be exotic, mysterious, dramatic, and dangerous. A mistress must occasionally be recalled if she becomes disobedient and self-centered and fails to do her duties. She receives the warning, and she has three days to take care of business. Tilo decides to travel to Oakland because she adores spices and is familiar with their histories, the symbolic meanings of their hues, aromas, and even their names. Every Indian spice could be found at her shop, and when she held one in her hand, it would speak to her and occasionally even give her instructions. Her corner store, SPICE BAZAAR, went by that name.

She is considered by some as a witch woman but when they face problems, they come to her for solutions. As a Mistress it is her duty to understand their longings for the ways they chose to leave behind when they chose America without their revealing.

Each chapter in this book is titled after a different spice, which reveals the spice's powers and where they came from, making the story incredibly intriguing for the reader to keep reading. She discusses many issues that women experience in the chapters and even offers an answer by using spices to treat such issues. People who are troubled in society, suffer from alienation and loneliness, or battle within, make an effort to accept this woman. She serves as a human goddess to them, solving their issues. Even though Tilo, the owner of the grocery store, pursues difficulties despite her limitations and limited promises, she is the caretaker of human problems and their ups and downs. For instance, turmeric is utilized as a defense against heartache, a remedy for death,

and a source of hope for rebirth. It is also known by the name Halud, which means yellow and is the color of dawn, corals, and shell sound. It is applied to infants' heads for good luck, dusted over coconuts during puja, and even worked into the borders of new and wedding saris. Black pepper is cooked and drunk to relax the throat and practice saying "No"—which is particularly difficult for Indian ladies. Powder of almond and kesar to boil in milk, to drink at bedtime to sweeten your words and thoughts to remember the love buried under the anger... and so on.

Though numerous people visit her place of work, Tilo tempts her to talk to just a few of them. A few of them included her grandpa Lateefa, Lalitha, Haroun, Jagjit, Kwesi, Geeta, and the lone American. On Friday nights, he typically shows up. She first encountered him, at which point her true femininity became apparent. He has a strong attraction toward her. Despite the spices' warning, she continues to enjoy having him and is even losing control of the spices. She is unable to express in words what the American does when he touches her hand. Though she snatches her hand as obedient to her mistress' the sensation stays. When asked by Tilo, the American recollects his childhood, how his mother used to maintain everything clean and neat, how she loved him, and so on. But he hates her like anything. Till that time, he believed himself to be a true American but now he realizes that he is not a true American and his name is RAVEN, he always feels hurting, confused and angry. He met Tilo-the old woman in the spice bazaar on someone's advice. He invites her to accompany him to find out earthly paradise. As a Mistress one should not touch others but Tilo has crossed this rule many times. As a Mistress of Spices, she must feel other's pain and leave her own passions behind, but from the time she was attracted by the American, spices start working against her as well as the persons to which they were used.

The first mother appears that night and warns her saying "If you try to help outside the protected walls turn on itself ". (Divakaruni). Tilo then decides not to see outside even out of the window.

One day The Raven meets her and offers her a white dress that settles on her like the petals of a lotus. And in his company, she tastes a bit of wine too. when she returned back to the store, she had a message revealing that "Shampathis fire is calling back and she has been left only three days for decision" (Divakaruni). On the second last night, she begs the spices to give her such beauty for a single evening that, after spending it with her, he would never again spend time with another woman without regret. She made a lot of money on the final day of sales since nothing was given

away for free. Tilo then fulfills the American's wish by making love to them. Although she says she needs an hour of sleep and is willing to accept whatever burdens they may present, she lies down.

After a while, when she heard Raven, she was in a confusion whether she was dead or alive but Spices speak to her saying that as she accepted the punishment in mind without battling that was enough for her and no need to undergo any physical punishment. Now she was neither like the old mistress nor like the young lady of the last day. But a moderate woman-just as Raven imagined her to be. In search of earthly paradise when they crossed a tollbooth, she heard about the destruction of the earthquake caused in Oakland. Looking into the water she recollects the destruction caused by her in the village during her childhood. She feels the responsibility and decides to go back to Oakland instead of with Raven. In the end, some things are most important than one's own joy. The novel ends with Tilo finding a new life and a new name to give meaning to her existence. She gives herself the name Maya. The name has a number of connotations like illusion, spell, and enchantment. She says that this naming is very different *The Mistress of Spices* depicts the paradox and incongruity of life. Divakaruni's characters reflect the predicament of being caught between two conflicting cultures, the Indian and the American, two different approaches to life, the internal and the external. (Divakaruni)

2.3. Characters:

The novel involves many characters which are:

Tilo: Tilo the protagonist is a “round character” because she has many different qualities and she develops herself during the story's actions. Tilo is the owner of a spice store in Oakland, California. She does not just sell Indian Spices but she also helps her customers in solving their problems through her magical power of reading their minds and their hearts.

The old one: She is like Telo's mother and teacher; she is the one who teaches everything about spices and the land of spices to Tilo and the other mistresses.

Customers:

The lovely American: Raven is his name. Ravan is the man who falls in love with the protagonist Tilo.

Geeta: She was born in America but her family comes from India, she falls in love with a Mexican boy, which is not allowed by her family.

Rau and Sheela: They are the parents of Geeta, who were disappointed with the behavior of their daughter.

Geeta's Grandfather: firstly, he was against his granddaughter, but then he sees that she is happy, and he tries to help her and her parents to get together again.

Jagit: He is an Indian little boy that is first bullied by his classmates at school, Tilo gives him a potion in order to make him brave.

Haroun: He is a Taxi driver, that feels love and nostalgia for Tilo because she connects him with his country India.

Hameeda: She is the neighbor of Haroun who is in love with him.

Kwesi: He is an American teacher of karate, who usually goes to the bazaar in order to buy a few things.

Lalitha: She is an Indian woman that was abused by her husband (Roca).

The spices: in the novel, spices are treated as real characters. They are flat characters since they remain unchanged and stable in the novel.

2.4. The Main Themes in *The Mistress of Spices*:

The Mistress of Spices has several intriguing themes that help us better comprehend Chitra and who is she. Many of her themes are extremely relevant and especially helpful even today because of how spiritually and universally she developed them, rather than the issues themselves.

2.4.1. Nostalgia:

As can be seen, the subject of nostalgia covered every chapter of the book, from the start to the very end. An example of this is the moment in which Tilo experiences nostalgia for her past and wonders about her own life. She discovers contradictions in her past as she explores more deeply. She herself says:

“Sometimes I wonder if there is such a thing as a reality, an objective and untouched nature of being, or if all we encounter has already been changed by what we imagined it to be. If we have dreamed it into being.” (Divakaruni)

It is shaped more one time in Tilo’s speech about the Island of mistresses when Tilo was about to go to Oakland:

“We had glorious it'd be exhausting to depart this island of girls wherever on our skin the nice and cozy rain fell like pomegranate seeds, where we woke to birdcall and slept to the primary Mother’s singing, where we swam naked without shame in lakes of blue lotus. To exchange it for the human world whose harshness we have a tendency to remember. But this? (Divakaruni 156)

2.4.2. The Conflict between Love and Duty:

Being in love isn't allowed for Tilo as a mistress. She finds herself stuck between her obligations as a mistress and her own wants and needs as a person. She is driven to rebel against her responsibilities on several levels by the intense sensation of love. Tilo has broken all rules and expectations. Through her resolution, she discovered the freedom to express her own needs and to create a new life in her own identity formation as if she is born into a new identity. Making love with Raven brings Tilo a symbolic change making her more human rather than supernatural and it gives a sense of harmony with the outside world. As a consequence, Tilo’s life is full of disasters. Tilo realizes that her act of offending the rules of falling in love with the American is responsible for all her sadness.

“O exhilaration, I thought. To be upraised up through the attention of chaos, to balance breath-stopped on the edge of nothing. And the plunge that will follow, the shattering of my matchstick body to smithereens, the bones flying free as foam, the heart finally released.” (Divakaruni 232)

2.4.3. Identity Crisis:

When someone is experiencing an identity crisis, they may start to fabricate a variety of self-fulfilling illusions, justify their mistakes, forge a new identity, or even disappear completely from the face of the planet. The concept of identity and the word self are closely connected. Nearly four different names have been used to address Tilo, representing four contradictory and perplexing identities over the course of one lifetime.

(Tomlinson) Nayan Tara was Tilo's name when she was born in a hamlet. She was then carried away by pirates and given the name "Bhagyavati." The snakes called her "Sarpakanya" after she made the decision to travel to the island. For becoming a mistress of Spices, she changed her name to Tilo meaning "a life giver and a restorer of health and hope". To come to a definitive definition of her selfhood, she must repeatedly alter who she is.

2.4.4. Time and Space:

In the works of the Magic Realists, time behaves strangely. Sometimes it goes backward instead of forward. When you go into some Magic Realism, time doesn't behave the way we'd expect it to in the real world, so it might be difficult to determine where you stand. Time isn't this predictable reliable progression from one second to the next; for Magic Realists, it's not linear.

Tilo has reached a condition of liminality, a time interval between the present and the future during which she is unaware of his location. A theme that permeates the novel's portrayals of the link between time and location is seen in how she rushes across the black rivers between her past and present homes.

2.4.5. Racism:

Tilo sees the opposite side of South Asian racial identity as she observes a distinct class of South Asians. Wealthy Indians are protected from racism and detach themselves from the black population, associating almost exclusively with the white upper class, in contrast to the lower-class clients previously mentioned.

“The rich Indians descend from hills that twinkle brighter than stars... The car stops, the uniformed chauffeur jumps up to hold open the gold-handled door, and a foot in gold sandal steps down. Soft and arched and almost white... the rich Indians rarely speak... Inside the store which they have entered only because friends said, “It’s so quaint, you must go and see it at least once” ... The rich Indians crane their necks and lift their chins high because

they have to be more always than other people, taller, more handsome, better dressed... [They] have their bodies like moneybags out the door and into their satin cars... Other rich people send lists instead because being a rich person is a busy job. Golf cruises charity luncheons in the Cornelian Room shopping for new Lamborghinis and cigar cases inlaid with lapis lazuli. Still, others have forgotten to be Indian and eat caviar". (Divakaruni 78/9)

2.5. Symbolism in *The Mistress of Spices*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* described the lifeless spices as living beings. Spices are treated by Chitra as characters in her novel *The Mistress of Spices*. They are used not only for the purpose of cooking but for curing diseases for the immigrants in America. Chitra is an immigrant writer who uses her firsthand experience in her novels... The Indian Spices have been metaphorically interpreted by the Indo-American Woman author Divakaruni to draw on knowledge beyond science. It also portrays the portrayal of different spice-related myths, magic, and history. It is shown that symbolic spices have a real, perceptible and observable relationship with the protagonist. Chitra was able to make the novel and sense more meaningful by characterizing the Spices, Indian Spices as idealized, mythical beings belonging to India as non-human beings; but the other human characters, for example, Raven, an American; Tilo, Jagjit, as Immigrant Indians in America; many other minor characters from India, but live as immigrants in America. With magic spells, Chitra unified myth and symbols. This reminds us that magical powers can result in disasters as to their use and violation of these rules. She mastered her characters by using symbols and spices. Chitra used some common archetypal symbols like flame, colors, rain, and great mother in *The Mistress of Spices*. She gave voice to the voiceless spices and rendered them as a static character (Divakarun).

The novel *The Mistress of Spices* is divided into fifteen chapters, thirteen of which are named after different spices like Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, Kalo Jire, Neem, Red Chili, Makaradwaj, Lotus Root and Sesame which reveal their origin and strength. Also, she has shared an amazing story about spices. Thus, spices become an important part of the novel. It helps her to describe her splendid thoughts. It also allows her to reflect on the

feelings and emotions of both the author and the narrator. It also reflects the tradition of the land the spices belong to.

A study of Gurinder Chadha and Paul Mayeda Berges' Cinematic Adaptation of *The Mistress of Spices* talks about the importance of food metaphor. Each culture has its own special cuisine which is closely associated with their culture. Each spice has a unique specialty for medical purposes as well as food in the kitchen. Divakaruni has named every chapter of her novel by the name of spices providing their origin and special quality.

It is impossible to ignore the role and importance of the spices. In ancient times it was the spices that lured the West to the East. Actually, the whole colonial mission started on account of the spices. Thus, spices symbolize exoticism and Orientalism. The spices have been given a magical treatment, which makes them even more alluring. It is obvious that the spices and their mistress are symbolic representations of an old culture that was complicated and unique. Like Shange, Divakaruni also through the spices tries to equate her desire to preserve Indian sensibility in her host country. The "Spices" which are equated to food are an important signpost in Indian culture and cultural heritage. Food also suggests the sojourner's ineradicable connection with their homeland and also symbolizes the blending of cultures and the immigrants' progress towards advancement and assimilation. Thus, one can connect the importance of preserving one's foremother's recipes in order to connect with our immediate past. It is a natural phenomenon in multiculturalism to seek means to preserve cultural heritage.

Symbolism has been rightly fixed in the novel to deliver the concept of life. The symbols that have been used in this novel are the knife and the snake, to make the readers understand the concept of life and indication of other births of Tilottama. Also, Fire was used by Chitra, it symbolizes creative energy, divine vision, salvation, and knowledge.

Once Tilo changes her 'self' when she craves to seduce Raven. Here, is connected with her sexual desire which is also an important aspect of being a trickster. Tilo symbolizes various tricksters in different Native cultures who are known for changing their shapes to seduce human beings. And now, Tilo has a new self, resembling her namesake the apsara Tilottama from the Indian lore. Tilo is amazed at her own looks as she thinks:

Young and ageless at one ... Forehead flawless like a new opened shape leaf, nose tipped like the til flower. Mouth curved as the bow of Madan, God of love ... a goddess-face free of mortal blemish, distant as an Ajanta Painting (Divakaruni 279).

Spices in Divakaruni's novel stand for a lot of things simultaneously in the novel. They are an important household commodity for the Indian immigrant community, in addition to catering to the nostalgia for the homeland left behind. Concurrently, for people not belonging to the Indian immigrant community, spices provide the "exotic" quotient in their multicultural palettes. Spices are shown to empower their mistress while at the same time, they enslave her. Spices, as the First Mother says in Divakaruni's novel, symbolize tradition. Tradition is handed down from generation to generation, and with tradition comes knowledge. Spices and their magical/medicinal use are part of that knowledge. Spices are as rigid as the monolithic traditions they belong to. The film and the novel seem to coalesce as both have empowered spices as a signifier of India and the Indian ethos. Thus, spices become the Indian way of constructing the multicultural world in the postcolonial era by co-opting Western consumerism.

Spices in *The Mistress of Spices* become an important part of the book. They help Chitra to describe her splendid thoughts. They also allow her to reflect the feelings and emotions of both the author and the narrator. They also reflect the tradition of the land the spices belong to which is India. Indian Spices on account of their myth and history become the tool to extend the narrative plot in a dramatic or significant way. Every spice is characterized by a certain mythical impression in curing disease or in their use during festivities. Chitra portrays both 'Tilo' and 'Indian Spices' from a cross-cultural context. She has introduced the spices to the readers through Tilo in the novel. She has shown the spices talking with their mistress verbally or nonverbally. The spices of course have relevance in creating their sphere in Indian food, in Indian medicinal therapy and in Indian civilization. They believe and behave in a tradition-bound orthodox Indian way. They restrict Tilo from breaking the particular rules and regulations of a mistress to help others. Divakaruni said in an interview "The spices are very important in this book. As characters, they have personalities of their own. Different sections are named after them. They play an important role in the novel. They develop a relationship with Tilo and talk to her in their own voices." (Menier, 2008).

Spices perform their role several times as supernatural beings to control her cultural beliefs, existential fate and her falling into ennui. It suggests that gradually Indian Spices become alien to

her emotional urges and performance in spite of her strictness or discipline in curing the diseases and problems of the customers with the help of spices.

2.6. Critics:

The Mistress of Spices received a tremendous amount of criticism, but it also gained popularity over a period of more than twenty years, which helped make Chitra famous and successful. Throughout history, *The Mistress of Spices* has drawn criticism for a variety of reasons. Many historians and critics, including those from Africa, Asia, and the United States, have criticized it.

According to A Padmaja, the meeting places for ethnic people, particularly from the Asian community, "Kurma House," the coffee shop run by Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams* and Tilo's Indian spice store in *The Mistress of Spices*, reflect the aspirations, disappointments, pains, and pleasure felt by them. In America, Indian grocery stores frequently serve as the guardians of cultural identity. The majority of these shops carry all of the common grocery products required in Indian cuisine, including dals, spices, rice, flours, canned and pickled goods, frozen Indian meals, Indian sweets, kitchenware, etc. Some even offer fresh vegetables and video cassettes of recent Hindi and regional films that are not typically found in supermarkets. Actually, Divakaruni makes all the actions happen in these places. (Padmaja)

It wasn't so long ago that Simon de Beauvoir criticized Western literature for portraying women in conventional ways, such as goddesses or vamps. According to critical analyses, writers have portrayed Indian women as exotic while also being repressed; as obedient, sensitive, and modest. Several roles played by women can be found in *The Mistress of Spices*. As daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, they are represented. But Tilo is special because she is a brave heart from the beginning, which makes her a unique character. Her life is guided by her own plans. She dedicated her entire life to supporting women's rights so that they are not treated unfairly. Her ability to maintain her lone existence in the US is unsurprising given that she is magical. (Batra)

According to C. Bharathi, Divakaruni's novel depicts women entangled in the mesh of their own psyche born out of the pressures of a society that is both patriarchal and cloistered but, in the end, all of them break the strongholds of their society and explore new avenues. In a remarkable terse

and evocative language, Divakaruni tells the story of a pronouncedly individual woman who emerges as a representative figure with her brave attempt to find an identity of her own. (Bharathi)

Another critic, Jagdish Batra, believes that the use of magic or magical realism as the narrative style by Chitra in *The Mistress of Spices* puts her on par with renowned writers like Salman Rushdie of India, Gunter Grass of Germany, Gabriel Garcia Marquez of Columbia, and Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina. (Batra)

Jeff Zaleski comments on Chitra Banerjee's narrative art, saying: "Divakaruni combines a gift for absorbing narrative with the artistry of a painter." Her poetic descriptions of the character's inner and outer worlds bring a rich emotional chiaroscuro to an uplifting story about two women who learn to make peace with the difficult choices circumstances have forced upon them (Zaleski)

Conclusion:

To sum up, Divakaruni's novel shows how the Indian community in America has worked hard to preserve its cultural traditions. Her approach to ethnic identification is based on her belief that Indian history and its American experience must be integrated, according to the South Asian Diaspora. Every individual or character, Divakaruni said, has their own experience. In *The Mistress of Spices*, several characters show various acculturation tactics such as generation, culture, food, assimilation, racism, identity crisis, self-esteem, and sadness. Tilo's character shows the predicament of being caught between two cultures - the Indian and American. Tilo wants to adopt a culture that values and respects individuality. Tilo tries to build her persona in the pattern of the American lifestyle, which causes ambivalence as well as distances herself from her previous associations with the Indian Spices

Chapter three
Myth and Diaspora in
The Mistress of Spices

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Chapter Three: Myth and Diaspora in *The Mistress of Spices*

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has incorporated several contemporary issues into *The Mistress of Spices*. Interracial conflict, ethnic identity, immigrant assimilation, adolescent anxiety, abusive and destroyed marriages, domestic violence, and prohibited interracial romances, along with Hindu myth, fables, and symbolism as she also claims that, “It’s a kind of magical-realist genre heavily influenced by the folk traditions of India especially of Bengal” (Divakaruni, “Dissolving Boundaries”). Here, she illustrates immigration problems and makes an effort to address them by illustrating the magical properties of spices, for Divakaruni understands that “the process of art creation is rather mysterious. Although we discuss it a lot, it is mysterious and intuitive”. (Mangla).

The current chapter examines some of these mysterious levels, discovers components of ancient Indian medical science, analyzes the novel from a diasporic perspective, and explores some of these strange levels.

3.1 Myth in *The Mistress of Spices*

To illustrate the value of culture, tradition, and environment in human lives, Chitra uses myth in her novel. Tales based on culture, tradition, and religion are known as myths. In both modern and ancient cultures, they provide a deeper purpose rather than being only simple stories. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni discusses how myths highlight the importance of the culture and traditions of a particular population and how they inspire people to solve both internal and external difficulties in their lives. Chitra has retold Indian myths regarding spices to represent history. Red Chilli is mythically believed to be the child of the Fire God, Turmeric is supposed to come out of the ocean when the Asuras and Devas churned for the precious treasures of the universe, Fenugreek was sown by Shabari the oldest woman of the world and Fennel was eaten from sage Vashistha after swallowing the demon Illwal so that he would not come back to life again.

India's people take their culture and traditions with them wherever they go in order to survive in any circumstance. India is synonymous with a rich cultural legacy. Hindu mythology also holds mythological values for plants, snakes, monkeys, crows, rats, trees, and more than gods and goddesses. One of the most unique features of Hindu mythology and Hinduism is the belief that nature is the real god of all Indians, and this will be illustrated in the next section.

Tilo, the abbreviation for Tilottama, was formerly considered the most elegant dancer in the court of Lord Indra. Hindu mythology defines Indra as the king of the Gods. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Brahma is the universe's creator, and he warned Tilottama that if she falls in love with a human person, she will be condemned to seven lives of disease, deformity, and leprosy. Tilottama ignored Brahma's admonitions, disobeyed them, fell to the earth as a result of her crimes, and suffered greatly as a result. The Old One advises and forewarns Tilo to think about Tilottama's destiny if she ever feels inspired by her arrogance and ignorance to break the laws set forth for the Mistresses of Spices. But as the mythical Tilottama broke the promise made to Lord Indra, Tilo breaks the promise made to the Old One. When Tilo was leaving the island, The Old One gifted her a knife in order to remind her of the dangerous path she had to walk for being a Mistress of Spices.

The name Tilo also has another mythological meaning. It refers to the sesame seed, which, when touched by flame while being influenced by the Venus plant, turns gold-brown. Mothers wish for their daughters to have a nose like the sesame flower: tiny, straight, and pointed.

The focus of the novel is on discussing the magical healing properties of spices. The main character uses many spices, including cinnamon, fenugreek, and turmeric. For instance, Peppercorn has the power to reveal a person's secrets. Tilo introduces the silken powder of turmeric at the beginning of the story. One of the first holistic ("whole-body") healthcare systems is Ayurveda. It was created in India more than 3,000 years ago and is founded on the idea that mental, physical, and spiritual wellness must be carefully balanced in order for one to be healthy. Its major objective is to promote health, not to treat illness. However, treatments might be tailored to particular health issues. According to WebMD, turmeric is an antibiotic that protects people from bacterial infections and insect larvae. Although turmeric is used in food to add color, it also has significant medicinal benefits. Tilo said that turmeric is effective in enhancing our appearance and may be able to remove age spots and flaws. Based on Indian mythology, each spice has its own

designated day. mythology. For turmeric it is Sunday. It is used to sprinkle on the head of newborns and on the coconuts of puja, rubbed into the borders of new clothes. When Tilo holds the spices, Turmeric speaks to her:

I am turmeric who roses out of the ocean of milk when the Devas and Asuras churned for the treasures of the universe. I am Turmeric who came after the poison and before the nectar and thus lie in between (Divakaruni 14)

She thinks that turmeric, the armor of sorrows, offers a chance for rebirth. So, she gave the turmeric to Ahuja's wife for her couple's struggles.

Spice cited as the "friend maker" is cinnamon. It fights against heart disease and it is filled with acids. Cinnamon was thought to grant power to destroy enemies in early civilizations. That's why Tilo decides to give cinnamon to the small boy Jagit, who is the only Punjabi in his school, he was afraid of the school and his classmates.

The spice for Tuesday is fenugreek. Fenugreek is a medication used in Ayurveda to treat asthma, and hormonal disorders, and to maintain a healthy metabolism. It was first shown by Shabari, the oldest woman in the world "She is an elderly woman ascetic in the Hindu epic Ramayana. She was a fiercely devoted woman who, as a result of her Bhakti to Rama, received his darshan and benediction". (Vijayan)

Tilo described fenugreeks' taste as: "Put it in water and it will bloom free. Bite the swollen kernels between your teeth and taste its bittersweetness. Taste of water weeds in a wild place, the cry of grey geese" (Divakaruni 47)

To assist Ratna, Tilo requested the Fenugreeks' assistance. Because she feels mistreated by her husband, Tilo gave them the spice to cheer them up.

The next example is when Tilo runs across the lonely American who visits the store every Friday. The old one had informed them that there is only one specific spice there for each individual, so she decided to give him some spice because she felt so connected to him. Tilo searches and finds Asafoetida, a remedy to love as the ancient myth declared.

The spice of Wednesday is Fennel. Tilo consoles Lalita Ahuja's wife when she lost the turmeric and gives her Fennel instead. It provides a fresh smell and refreshment. She advised her to take a

pinch of Fennel after every meal, she insisted also to give some fennel to her husband too because Fennel helps to calm an angry person down after eating. There is a myth about Fennel

Sage Vashistha was Ram's guru and the Rajpurohit of the Ikshwaku dynasty. He was a peace-loving, intelligent, selfless, and great Rishi. He had established Gurukula (a residential college) on the banks of the river Beas, where he and his wife Arundhati was taking care of thousands of students. (Familypedia)

swallows the demon Ilwal, who had eaten fennel to prevent his return. When two people eat at the same time, fennel is said to act as an equalizer, taking strength from one and giving it to the other. Tilo, therefore believed Lalita had the power to defend her.

Tilo was covered up, and ginger was applied to restore her natural look. In Ayurveda, it is used to treat digestive issues and is regarded as one of the key ingredients in Indian curries. Tilo disobeys the mistress's order and uses the spice for her own benefit. She ate it, and it gives her a look younger.

When she falls in love with Raven, she was no more aware of the consequences. She used the spices another time for herself and this time requests the king of spices Makaradwaj to make her the most beautiful woman in the world. But the spice didn't speak because she ignored and humiliates the island's rules. Then it laughs and warns her:

Do you desire it more than you desired us on the island, that day when you would have thrown yourself off the granite cliffs had the First Mother said no. (Divakaruni 261)

The medicinal power and quality of the spices in the novel are real, they help in everyday life. But the magical part of the spices like solving the family problems, giving courage, and rebirth are the mythological allusions.

Some other spices are lotus root for lifetime passionate love and sesame, the protector of long voyages. These spices play a significant role in the novel, but it is important to utilize them responsibly, as their misuse could be dangerous. All these myths, folk tales, and secrets of spices contribute to the Indianness of the novel.

Unfortunately, the most essential rule on the spice island is that when the mistress engages in any forbidden behavior, the spices act against the beneficial persons. The result is that everyone who enters the spice shop gets into trouble. Due to Tilo's failed magic, Jagit the schoolboy, Lalitha, a normal Indian woman, and Geetha and other individuals face difficulties. When Lalita wrote a letter to Tilo about her problems, Tilo requests all the spices to help her. She said:

“Will pound almond and chyavanprash for mental strength and physical and set it outside the door for the wind to carry to the women-house where you wait.” (Divakaruni 273)

Finally, after consoling the spices and First Mother, she has got a new life and she named herself Maya. “In the old language, it can mean many things. Spell, Illusion, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after day” (Divakaruni 317)

The word “Maya” is Sanskrit in origin, it is extensively discussed by Lord Krishna in the Gita. In short, it is the power of illusion. One of the fanciful, transitory ideas of perfection that every person searches for as they race through life in a never-ending search for the unachievable is illusion... No person is ever content, and they always strive for the never-ending mirage of perfection. The fact that Tilo changed into Maya shows that she understood that absolute harmony was unachievable and that suffering and agony would always coexist with serenity, happiness, and wealth.

People mistakenly believe that spices are only used for cooking, but in this book, Divakaruni informs readers about the medicinal and magical powers of spices. To increase the benefits of spices she utilized myth.

As a result, myth plays a very essential role in this novel. Ancient people create a myth about every spice that can easily demonstrate the medicinal qualities of the spices. Because no one assigns importance to plain theory, it quickly reaches the minds of people when they add other myths and mystical elements that matter. Divakaruni cleverly handles the myth as a tool to explore the qualities of the spices.

3.2 Magical Realism in *The Mistress of Spices*

Magical realism helps people think more clearly about reality by using imagination as it is mirrored in magic, myth, and religion. In order to locate the strange in things, human existence, and human behavior, Divakaruni must confront and separate from reality.

Go through terrible austerity and a life of misery without basic comforts. She is made to take the vow of celibacy, to sacrifice body pleasures, and to give a haggard, old lady's body. Magical Realism is revealed when Tilo, speaks about her physique as an oxymoron of a young lady in an old woman's form. Even her own clients are unaware of her youth and her ability to have magical power.

They do not know, of course. That I am not old, that this seeming body I took on in Shampathi's fire when I vowed to become a Mistress is not mine... The eyes Which alone are my own (Divakaruni 5).

Actually, after completing her purification process and going into the "Shampati fire," she takes the readers to another planet. Another myth is shampati, People who are interested in Indian mythical tales would know that "Shampati" is the "bird of myth and memory", that bird which although being split into conflagration comes alive from ashes which coincides with Tilo and Raven. And this is a symbolic reference from mythology to add realism to the magical conversion, and here the incorporation of myth is one of the important elements of magical realism.

Tilo moved to an Indian spice shop in Oakland, California to sell Indian spices. She gets a glimpse into people's experiences. The important lives she transforms with the power of her spices are in the form of characters, such as Haroun (the taxi driver), because she has the power of foreseeing the future, particularly the minority group in her motherland who are threatened by the problems of homelessness. In her vision, she had seen that he would have an accident. Therefore, another unique characteristic of magic realism is the ability to predict the future through vision and have the incident actually occur in the future. When she saw the accident coming, she made the decision to assist him by taking the spice that is blue and black.

"Kalojire, a spice shaped like a teardrop, smelling raw and wild like tigers, to cover over what fate has written for Haroun" (Divakaruni 32). The novel begins with a sentence that, strikes the readers'

comments “I am a Mistress of Spices. I can work with others too. Mineral, metal, earth and sand and stone...but the spices are my love” (Divakaruni 3)

By introducing herself as Tilo, who is named after the spice of nourishment ‘Til’- sesame seed, it’s clear that the novelist is trying to fly with the reader to another world. It is important to keep in mind here that the content of the novel is separated into fifteen chapters and each one of these chapters is named after a spice. “Turmeric”, “Cinnamon”, “Fenugreek”, “Asafoetida”, “Fennel”, “Ginger”, “Peppercorn”, “Kalo Jire”, “Neem”, “Red Chilli”, “Makaradwaj”, “Lotus Root”, and “Sesame”, are all popular spices that used to use by the Indians in their daily life specifically in cooking.

Both the first and the last chapter’s titles are after the protagonist’s name; The first Chapter is “Tilo” and the final chapter is “Maya”. All the novel is based on the transformation of Nayan Tara to Bhagyavati to Tilo to Maya with the spices acting as the motivators.

The book may appear on the surface to be a cookbook divided into the names of spices, but the magic is in how they are used. The mistress of spices, (Tilo), is in charge of all the spices; she speaks to them and controls them to cure, safeguard, and nourish them. Divakaruni emphasizes how the spices can communicate with Tilo through some sort of sorcery.

‘The calling thought’ is one of the magic realism elements that is used successfully every time when the protagonist Tilo is in a difficult situation, she would talk to the Old one from whom she learned the power of spices. This old one told about the calling thought too:

The calling thought can draw to you whoever you desire a lover to your side, an enemy to your feet. Which can lift a soul out of a human body and place it raw and pulsing in your palm? Which used imperfectly and without control can bring destruction beyond imagining (Divakaruni 18).

Tilo had a lot of snake friends. They protected her from the pirates. Divakaruni draws on the folklore she recalls from her youth, including stories of the speaking serpents and the sleeping city under the ocean. But in the Spices novel, she virtually completely changed them. Snakes speaking to Tilo in this scene demonstrate magical thinking. This issue, "the talking of snakes," was recognized as being normal, and Tilo replied to them. This is one of the elements of magical realism that we call "fantasy." ». She refers to the speaking serpent as a fantastic serpent. A creature

that regularly makes myths in the novels. The speaking serpent has a different type of magic, and it symbolizes the beauty of the natural world, and is not governed by logic, but comes to the mortal as a blessing.

She goes through a purifying process on the "Island of Spices" under the direction of a strict "First Mother" who teaches her and forces her to

To find a place in his Dreamland America. He is considered unsuitable and is having trouble finding a position. Tilo placed the cinnamon stick in Jaggi's turban (which is required for a Punjabi) since cinnamon is known as a "Friend Maker," "Destroyer of enemies," and "to give strength" — strength not only to the body but also to the mouth. Jagjit thus gains the power needed to speak out against evil acts and violence performed against his American friends. After this magical created feeling, of course, people around the world would want to use Cinnamon!

Ahuja's wife is a female character in the novel "Lalita" who also has problems. She represents most people who are powerless in violent relationships and unhappy marriages. Tilo uses "Fennel" to solve Lalita's problem, which helps her get out of a life of domestic abuse and violence. At the end of the novel, Lalita writes Tilo a note of gratitude and states:

Meanwhile, I will pound almond and chyavanprash for mental strength and
physical and set it outside the door for the wind to carry to the woman-house
where you wait. (Divakaruni 273)

Magic realism in this example is again highlighted by the use of one of the five elements of the Earth – Wind energy.

The turning point in the story occurs when Tilo falls in love with Raven right away, whom she calls "My American." Raven is also attracted to her beauty; he seems to be able to understand her supernatural prowess and see beyond her physical appearance. He trusts in Tilo with his own story because he believes she can assist him in revealing the hidden power he intended to obtain but was unable to do so. This fact gives Raven's character a mythological touch.

Tilo is currently caught between her desire and her duty as a mistress, who should always put others' needs before her own and never engage in any form of personal pleasure. She uses "Makaradwaj," a spice known as "The King of Spices" or "The Conquer of Time," to transform

her body and make her beautiful in order to discover her hidden eagerness and desire, which is undoubtedly the sexual union of two loving souls. She is overpowered by her attraction to the raven. In this example, Chitra uses magic realism in an amazing way like in fairytales, particularly in the story of Cinderella, when Tilo transforms herself for just one night from an old body into a sensual, mystic, and spiritual Aspara in a white dress (that Raven had gifted her), elegantly flowing her waistline emitting a floral perfume.

“By tomorrow night Tilo, you will be at the beauty’s summit. Enjoy well. For by next morning, it will be gone” (Divakaruni 263).

Raven was amazed, and couldn’t say anything but, “I had not dared to dream such beauty. I do not dare to touch it.” (Divakaruni 280).

The effect of the transformation here was Magical! And the first element of magical realism is Magic.

When Tilo tries to jump into the Shampati's Fire after defiling her body (similar to the idea of Sita in the Ramayana, who undergoes purification through "Agni Pariksha") and she finds herself in Raven's hands. This is another important key point or dramatic turn of events that has already been discussed. It appears that The Spices have forgiven her and allowed her to live her own life as she wants.

By the novel's end, Raven proposed Tilo a new name “Maya” which is a Hindu term defining the everyday world of desire, pain, and joy the world of illusion, a place of inevitable sorrow from which man tries to escape. Here, Maya personifies magic and magic realism.

3.2.1. Magical Role of Spices in *The Mistress of Spices*

Spices are handled as characters via the Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni inside the *Mistress of Spices*. Divakaruni has dealt metaphysically with Indian Spices to touch the expertise beyond technological know-how. She has also depicted myths, magi, and records associated with spices. The spices have a tangible, perceptible, and manifesting relationship with Tilo, the protagonist. It also explores the importance of spices in the socio-cultural views of the novel and the mental angle in Tilo's lifestyle.

Inside the *Mistress of Spices*, the Spices communicate, sing, rebuke, love, warn, and get irritated with their mistress Tilo. The Spices always act in Tilo's private alternatives like foreign bodies. The spices no longer let her cross beyond the limitations of a mistress. Tilo starts off evolving feeling helpless and caged in the shell of spices.

Tilo is aware of the spice's origin, their colorations, and their smells. She can call them by using their names and feels that the antique secrets and techniques of the spices had been forgotten how, but they became known to moms. The spices of actual power are from her birth land, the land of ardent poetry, India. Every bankruptcy of this novel is after a spice well-known shows their strengths and their origins and for that reason makes the novel very exciting to the reader to retain without postponing. In the chapters she offers exclusive troubles confronted by her customers and even observed a solution for them, healing them with the assistance of spices

3.3. Exploring Diaspora in *The Mistress of Spices*

A tale about duty and desire, conflict and reconciliation in the lives of the diaspora, here we are going to demonstrate the unevenness in the diasporic life showing the difficulty of the diasporic community, in a cross-cultural ambiance, to reconcile with the conflicting entities of their life. Divakaruni epitomizes the spices, appearing emblematic throughout the novel, as the treasure of India, "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination." This research focuses on how the author depicts an altruistic character like Tilo, who struggles to harmonize herself with the shifting priorities of her life. Her ambivalent ways are between her egalitarian sense of duty and bodily desire for love.

The story of human migration is an age-old one. Either to search for food or for shelter, human beings have migrated from one place to another. Making their home in an unknown terrain is a phenomenon that our ancestors have followed and what we do even today. Perceivably, it is a never-ending process. In Chitra's *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is an imagination of diasporic identity. She is from India but lives in Oakland. According to Michele Verna, Indians constitute a very large number among other diasporic nations because of their legacy of colonial migration. However, the Indian community has migrated to different parts of South East and far Eastern countries even during the pre-colonial period to spread religious beliefs, especially Buddhism and

Hinduism. Immigrants in those cities are also contributing to almost all sectors. In big cities, immigrants have little to do with their ancestral past; rather they assume a new identity. Far away from their homeland, they rebuild their home. Fluidity in their identity makes them transnational. Migration, once begun, never ends. They move from one city to another, moving their homes with them. Therefore, the idea of home becomes a constantly moving object and it is perceived that home can be built anywhere at any moment. The Indians living in America have to assimilate themselves with the new environment in order to survive. Tilo, the central figure of all these characters tries her best to give them solace until she is caught in her own desire. Tilo tries to bridge the gap between two different cultures and she is the only one to help the immigrant to come in terms with their lives and act as a synthesizer in the new environment. Multiple other immigrant characters also come into contact with Tilo and there are varying levels of adjustment to life in America

Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is a narrative wrought with diasporic detail that reflects on the protagonist's duty in a foreign land. She serves as a spice mistress in "Spice Bazaar." Apart from that identity, she has others too. Though Tilo loves Raven, she is dutiful to others as well. She treats all equally and she cares about her duty. Her sense of responsibility binds her to an obligation to be less impulsive in fulfilling her dream. Tilo is placed in Oakland by the choice of "First Mother" and she caters to people of different communities there. People come to her to buy spices. Sometimes she suggests to her customer's spices that are conducive to the cures of their problems, and sometimes they look for spices to use as condiments. To Tilo, this catering of spices is a sublime duty that is considered a sacred one. She thinks that she has been blessed to assume the responsibility conferred on her by "First Mother." She has promised "First Mother" not to relinquish the spices at any cost. She will be profaned if she defiles the promise. Like an ordinary human being, Tilo also faces ups and downs in her life but she does not dishearten anyone, nor neglect the spices. She is not concerned with her own desires and pleasure; rather she takes care of the sorrows of others.

The First Mother reminds her to emphasize duty over everything. She warns Tilo that her desire must not triumph over duty. The foremost thing is to serve humankind. Responding to the First Mother's warning, Tilo promises, "I will not fall, Mother ... My heart is filled with passion for the

spices, my ears with the music of our dance together ... I need no pitiful mortal man to love. I believe this” (Divakaruni 45).

Tilo’s commitment reminds us that what we do in our life is sacred and deviation from that is profane. This is why Tilo surrenders herself to a sublime cause. She serves society for its betterment. People come to her with problems and she tries to find the solution. In some cases, she applies spices to remedy problems. Among her customers is an immigrant old man and his American-born granddaughter, Geeta. Ancestral culture, represented by the grandfather, and the culture in which Geeta has been raised cannot be reconciled. Geeta’s lifestyle is misconstrued by her grandfather and conflicts arise between the two as a result. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the bipolarity of shaping cultural identities is apparent. However, the convergence of cultures is not appreciated by the grandfather. In India, Geeta’s lifestyle would have been circumscribed by patriarchy. There is a conflict. Geeta finds a non-Indian friend, Tilo meets Raven, and Jagjit accommodates himself with the boys who used to trouble him. However, there is a mystery and a lot of misgivings about how accepting of each other’s cultures people are. At a point, Tilo said:

American, it is good you remind me, Tilo who was at the point of losing myself in you. You have loved me for the color of my skin, the accent of my speaking, the quaintness of my customs which promised you the magic you no longer found in the women of your own land. In your yearning you have made me into that which I am not ... Perhaps I have done the same with you. But how can the soil of misconception nurture the seedling of love? (Divakaruni 309)

Like Geeta, Jagjit also struggles as a lonely boy in a foreign culture in America. The son of Punjabi parents, he has learned his first English word: “idiot.” Moreover, he is “shy-eyed” and a victim of teasing at school. In the playground, kids pull his turban off his head and make fun of his long, uncut hair. He is humiliated and hurt, but he does not make any sound when he cries, suppressing it by biting down on his lips. The humiliation discourages Jagjit from going to school. Tilo, the spice mistress, selects cinnamon for him because it has the quality to make friends and give him the strength to intimidate his enemies. Tilo said:

To find you someone who will take you by the hand, who will run with you and laugh with you and say See this is America, it’s not so bad ... to give you strength, strength which

grows in your legs and arms and mostly mouth till one day you shout no loud enough to make them, shocked, stop. (Divakaruni 42)

Here, Divakaruni intends to carry the message that America is a country that embraces people of diverse cultures and identities. Like her characters, Divakaruni is also an immigrant and has perhaps gone through some of these experiences. Jagjit, a Punjabi boy, has come to America with his family and the new home has a multicultural background. America's metropolises have the quality to embrace people regardless of their cultural identities. All-inclusiveness of this country gives space to both good and ugly things in life. Thus, the transformation of Jagjit is common. He transmutes himself into a different person. He makes friends in school (Gupta).

The diasporic sensibility of the writer permeates through the galaxy of immigrant characters who throng around *The Mistress of Spices*' spice store in Oakland. The spice store introduces a myriad of people hailing from different parts of the country India showing diversity craving for identity comprising rich, middle, and lower class- rich people's affectation showed in Anant Soni, Dr. Lalchandani and wife, Prameela Vijn, and Rajesh, etc; middle-class bougainvillea girls, Ramu, Geeta, Mohan, Daksha, Kwesi, etc lost in their predicaments; Haroun, Jagjit, Lalita, etc the working class people looking forlorn and engrossed in their incompatibility to sustain in the new culture with their native identity, etc. All the immigrants look desperate to vent their problems, and feelings and cater to their needs. The immigrants' incapability to cope with the new environment, new culture, new plurality, and to sustain their sense of identity is manifested by the writer very graphically. Thus, we see that the novel *The Mistress of Spices* mirrors myriad complexities underlying the domain constructed by Indian immigrants to establish an identity in the new culture. However, the novel gives a peep into diasporic sensibilities. She has also given the cyclorama of multiculturalism by delineating characters like Geeta, Lalita, Jagjit, and Haroun and giving voice to their striving for identity (Beg 229-234).

The physical body is the primary assertion of identity, both in appearance and action. A person is usually judged first and foremost on what they look like – tall, short, thin, fat, light-skinned, and dark-skinned. For immigrants, the experience of physical difference can be multiplied as they often have different ethnic features that differ from many of their American counterparts. In each instance in *The Mistress of Spices* where the body is involved, Divakaruni skillfully employs the horrific effects of diaspora on the physical condition of the immigrant. Since the body is

established as a significant element of identity, such representations carry great strength so the transformation of Tilo is also crucial. Such exploration of identity persists throughout the novel (Lamor).

3.3.1. The Jagged Path of Diaspora in *The Mistress of Spices*

Writing must come out of what we know, what we feel... But ultimately it must transcend all that to reach across time and space and memory to touch those who have never – and who will never – live as we have lived. What else is literature for? Because if it is only the specifics of a culture we want to record, surely a sociologist or an anthropologist could do it better. “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni”

But writing from the postcolonial generation isn't just about presenting a story; it's also about providing a framework for describing and defining experiences. The diasporic experience for immigrants to the United States is rife with challenge and hardship, on both a communal and personal level. Bhattacharya claims that immigrants constantly reevaluate their sense of self rather than accepting the "melting pot" roles anticipated by assimilationist Americans.

In the quest to comprehend the immigrant experience, writing that offers specific stories and sparks discussion is an effective tool. Gayatri Spivak says that "a literary critic negotiates with narratives." Narratives are exactly like pictures of everyday life, even fictitiously. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore the existing narratives of the Indian English writing community in order to make observations about experiences, challenges, and perspectives of Indian-American immigrants. Also, this reminds us that if we are able, as literary critics, to focus on the text and not indulge immediately in sociological applications, it becomes possible to examine narratives more effectively based on individual experiences within them.

3.4. The Significance of Spices in *The Mistress of Spices*



Each chapter in the novel is titled after a different spice, which states the spice's powers and where they came from, making the story incredibly interesting for the reader to keep reading. She discusses many issues that women experience in the chapters and even offers a solution by using spices to treat such issues. She only wants emotional satisfaction, which ultimately results in spiritual contentment, rather than wants for physical. satisfaction or diseases. People who are socially disturbed experience isolation and alienation as well as internal conflict that they must come to grips with. It is often tough for people to go through the painful process of resolving their internal conflict. She serves as a human goddess to them, solving all of their concerns. Even Tilo, who manages the grocery store, pursues the issues despite her constraints and limited promises; she is the keeper of people's troubles and their ups and downs.

Turmeric, also called Halud, which means "yellow," is the color of dawn, corals, and shells. It is utilized as a defense against heartache, a remedy for death, and a symbol of hope for rebirth. It is sprinkled over coconuts during puja, applied to newborns' heads for good luck, and even worked into the borders of new and wedding saris. When used to the skin, it removes blemishes, wrinkles, age, and fat while illuminating the complexion with a delicate golden shine.

Cinnamon, also known as dalchini. It is a destroyer of enemies and a friend maker and gives strength to arms; legs, and mouth. The oldest lady in the world, Shabari, was the one to plant the first fenugreek seed, which makes her body sweet again and ready for love.

Dhania or Coriander seed is used to clear the sight. It purges you of old guilt if you soak it and drink the water.

Amchur is utilized to bring back one's love of life and heal one's taste senses.

Mahamul the root spice, is utilized to enhance luck, promote joy, and ward off bad fortune.

Tulsi the basil plant of humility, slakes the craving for power and turns the thoughts inwards and away from worldliness. It is the curber of ego.

Hartuki-shriveled seed in the shape of a womb helps moms to bear the pain that begins with birthing.

Astringent leaf dried dark on the stem is utilized to reduce mistrust and avarice.

Black pepper is drunk and boiled to loosen the throat and learn to say 'No and hear me no' which is so difficult for Indian women.

Powder of almond and kesar to boil in milk, to drink it before bed to sweeten your thoughts and words to remember the love buried under the anger.

Fenugreek, the spice for Tuesday, tastes fresh as the river wind. In a narrative that has become even more barren, it plants desire. The body becomes once again pleasant and receptive to love. According to legend, Shabari, the oldest lady in the world, discovered this speckled seed first.

The spice of Wednesday is Fennel, the day of the average middle-aged person. It smells of impending change and is as muddy brown as it is gloomy, with leaves moving in the fall breeze. After every meal, consume a pinch of fennel, raw and whole, to improve digestion and freshen the breath. It provides the necessary mental strength. It even cools the temper. It strengthens them and helps them digest their sorrows. It also acts as an equalizer. When two people consume this at the same time, it transfers power from one to the other (HAIJU and GHRIB).

3.4.1. Benefits of using spices in *The Mistress of Spices*

In *The Mistress of Spices* all chapters are called after spices like cinnamon, turmeric and fenugreek, quite common in Indian kitchens. Whenever an Indian is found, a spice is found. Kerala is famous for spices. As India is blessed with a varied climate, each of its states produces some

spices or the other. No wonder why spices are used so for cooking in India. Not only in India but also in other countries, spices are considered to be of great use.

Some advantages of the use of spices are: Bay leaf oil possesses antifungal and bacterial factors. Cardamom facilitates to control horrific breath and digestive disorder. Superstar antise is also used for bad breath. Moreover, it is ideal for diabetes. Saffron is likewise used for allergies; Mustard oil is ideal for frame massage or even for getting appropriate hair. Tilo who's the heroine of the radical makes use of forms of spices that own Magical energy to treatment her clients.

Spices are not simplest for cooking, they may be also used for homesickness and alienation that the Indian Immigrants in Tilo's save experience. Tilo is always there to help her customers and so they visit Tilo with the desire of solving their problems. Additionally, Tilo meets their needs and needs without disappointing Them.

Conclusion

This study highlights the diaspora literature found in *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Tilo, the main character of Divakaruni, expresses love, nostalgia, the search for identity, and magic. Indians and Americans both suffer in the American society that the novel structures. As a result, it can be seen how it evaluates literary works in light of history, ideology, form, and content. One can observe from the book's content that immigrants and Americans both had an impact on the diaspora and were both affected by it.

General Conclusion

The core of Chitra's novels originates from ancient legendary culture and tradition, myths, superstitions, and enigmatic occurrences that create the magical world of her mystical existence. A lot of the magic comes from the description of a unique atmosphere and from a specific approach to the concept of time. The portrayal of a unique environment and a specific perspective on the concept of time are the sources of much of the magic. Her magic is often considered as it is a natural element. The way Chitra mixes the real with the fantastic is one of the characteristics that distinguish her as a magic realist writer.

The world of myth and symbolism connected to magical realism, as shown in Chitra's novels, effectively eliminates any chance of resistance or criticism in the narrative. In actuality, the use of myth in magic realism is neither unique from that in traditional stories, nor is it the only means of magic in it. The purpose of resisting a strict use of realism even in addressing social, political, and historical issues is that it presents the reader as well as the writer with an alternative method to express a different interpretation of a "reality" which has always existed.

This study focused on the practical analysis of Chitra's *The Mistress of Spices*, by presenting the issues of immigrants and their diasporic life in America. They suffered a lot and experienced many abuses, such as discrimination, racism, nostalgia, and many other issues. Literature assisted in presenting the voice of the Indian immigrants, whereas writers and intellectuals had faced these harsh conditions. *The Mistress of Spices* by Divakaruni shows deeply this meaning. It tackled Tilo's life in America. Chitra wanted to show her culture, tradition, and mythology to both Indians and white people. she also talked about immigrants and Diaspora.

Therefore, the primary goals of this study were to make four important issues:

- The power of magical spices.
- The great mythology of Indians.
- The issues of immigrants and their diasporic life in America.
- The role of symbolism in Divakaruni's novel

The novel is an amazing piece of art, a window into the experiences of immigrants in America, and a prime example of magical realism. Divakaruni was able to destroy the stereotype that one may only define their identity in terms of social and political levels by blending myth, fantasy, and realism. Tilo's character shows the predicament of being caught between two cultures - the Indian

and American. Tilo wants to adopt a culture that values and respects individuality. Tilo tries to build her persona in the pattern of the American lifestyle, which causes ambivalence as well as distances herself from her previous associations with the Indian Spices. Chitra wants to demystify myths. She says this thing through her protagonist Tilo and through her conflicts.

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ملخص الدراسة

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تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أسلوب الأسطورة والرمزية في رواية، "سيدة البهارات" للكاتبة شيترا بانيرجي ديفا كاروني كما توضح كيف أن هذين الأسلوبين مرتبطين ببعضهما البعض. وفي إطار استكشاف المواضيع الرئيسية للرواية، تستكشف الدراسة أيضا مشكلة المهاجرين والمغتربين في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار حيث أن الشتات موضوع بارز جدا في دراسات وأدب ما بعد الاستعمار. تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً عملياً لكيفية عرض اللغة والأسلوب والشخصيات والأرض والوضع الاجتماعي والتقاليد الثقافية في الرواية لبناء هوية الأشخاص في رواية سيدة البهارات. وكفروع ثقافية، تجمع الكاتبة روايتها بطقوس وعادات وممارسات تتعلق بالطعام، اللباس، ولغتها الأم. درست رواية ديفا كاروني الحائزة على جائزة أدبية، كمثال لعدة قضايا عالمية تحاول ديفا كاروني إزالتها من خلال تجسيد شخصيتها الخيالية تيلو، البهارات الهندية المزروعة بالبراعة وقوة الشفاء، والعجوز الأم التي تبدو ملتصقة بالبوذية. وصفت ديفا كاروني التوابل التي لا حياة لها بأنها كائنات حية. ولقد جسدت الكاتبة الهندية الأميركية ديفا كاروني مجازاً هذه التوابل الهندية بشكل رمزي بهدف الاستفادة من المعرفة التي تتجاوز حدود العلم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شيترا بانيرجي ديفا كاروني، أساطير، رمزية، أدب الشتات، أدب هندي، موضوعات، توابل

Résumé

Cette étude tente d'analyser les thèmes du mythe et du symbolisme dans le roman de Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni "La maîtresse des épices". Il fournit de plus amples informations sur les liens entre ces deux. La diaspora étant un thème majeur dans les études et la littérature postcoloniales, l'étude examine également la question des immigrés et de la littérature de la diaspora tout en examinant les thèmes principaux du roman. L'étude propose une analyse pratique de la manière dont la langue, le cadre, le style, les personnages, la terre et la maison, le statut social et les traditions culturelles sont présentés dans le roman pour construire l'identité des personnes dans la maîtresse des épices. L'auteur incorpore des traditions, des coutumes et des pratiques culturelles dans son écriture en utilisant des références à la cuisine, aux vêtements et à son dialecte natal. La maîtresse des épices, le roman primé de Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a été analysé comme l'incarnation d'un certain nombre de problèmes mondiaux que Divakaruni tente de résoudre via la représentation de son personnage fictif, Tilo. Les épices indiennes illuminées du pouvoir de guérison et l'Ancien qui semble être un adepte du bouddhisme. Divakaruni a décrit les épices sans vie comme des êtres vivants. Le romancier indo-américain Divakaruni a interprété symboliquement les épices indiennes comme s'appuyant sur des connaissances extérieures à la science.

Mots clés : Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Mythes, Symbolisme, Littérature de la diaspora, Littérature indienne, Thèmes, épice