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Hybridity And Communal Existence In The Novel *Mistress Of Spices* By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract

Globalization is become a crucial part of colonial society. The people travel from one place to another for mean of good life and luxury. The nationality crossed its boundary. Their sovereignty makes the life to think more adaptive. This is leaded to creative form for colonial establishment and hybridity. They travelled with their culture, tradition, religion and origin ness to the new found land. This land is not their mother land but mere communal existence. This is constructed the cultural identity and enhanced the study of third space. This also leads to the clash and identity crises. The proposed research idea analyses the cultural hybridity through social construction. The colony established by many migrants from different places. They travelled with distinct ethnic group. Their cultural preservation sets by both male and female. This projection becomes more essential to understand the postcolonial theory through diaspora. This diasporic study analyses the sense of dislocation felt in an alien nation. Further, it stresses on the struggle for identity, multiculturalism in society, cultural upheavals, and the continuous sense of displacement and disjunction. The writing of those who hail from India showcases the cultures as verminous, miscegenated with and by the cultures they interact with. Out of this dual or split consciousness, dichotomy and hybridity are born. Diaspora writing is

the work of exiles or expatriates and immigrants who have practiced unsettlement at every stage. The diasporic world is based on various factors which deal with human survival in post-colonial countries. The post-colonial society is the embodiment of Homi Bhabha's third space, reflecting the slippery slope of acculturation. The author tries to depict the effort taken by people to preserve their own culture in a newfound land, particularly visible through the first-generation migrants who attempt to transfer the same values and virtues to their children and later on to their grandchildren.

Keywords: communal existence, alienation, hybridity, in-between ness, colonial power, diaspora.

Introduction (themes / rationale)

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is a profound exploration of diasporic identity, cultural hybridity, and communal existence. Set in Oakland, California, the novel intertwines elements of magic realism with the lived realities of immigrants, creating a unique narrative space that bridges the traditional and the modern. At its core, the novel follows the journey of Tilo, a mystical "Mistress of Spices," who is tasked with helping others navigate the challenges of displacement, cultural alienation, and identity struggles. Through the symbolic use of spices, Divakaruni delves into themes of healing and transformation, portraying how diasporic communities negotiate their cultural roots while adapting to new environments. The excerpt presents a nuanced analysis of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*, positioning it within the framework of postcolonial discourse and diasporic studies. It underscores the themes of hybridity, identity, and cultural displacement through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts homelessness, ambivalence, mimicry, in-betweenness, and the third space. Divakaruni's narrative is a vivid portrayal of the immigrant experience, particularly the inner conflict and transformation that arise from navigating between contrasting cultural paradigms.

Tilo, the novel's protagonist, epitomizes the diasporic struggle, embodying multiple identities that signify her journey through cultural adaptation and self-discovery. Her transformation from Nayantara to Maya mirrors the complex layers of identity negotiation faced by immigrants in an alien land. The text highlights how hybridity operates as both a challenge and an opportunity, reflecting the dualities inherent in diasporic existence. The Western materialistic worldview and Indian spiritualism are presented as diametrically opposed forces, creating a moral and existential dilemma for the characters.

Furthermore, the narrative's setting a spice shop in Oakland serves as a communal space that fosters solidarity among diasporic individuals. The shop becomes a microcosm of the broader immigrant experience, where cultural preservation and adaptation coexist. This communal aspect underscores the importance of shared spaces in sustaining cultural identities and offering solace amidst alienation.

The analysis also emphasizes Divakaruni's unique storytelling approach, blending the fantastical with the everyday to transcend individual immigrant stories and address broader diasporic realities. By integrating Bhabha's theoretical insights, the text reveals how *The Mistress of Spices* articulates the trauma of exile, the guilt of abandoning one's homeland, and the challenges of acculturation in a foreign land.

The narrative's exploration of hybridity and identity politics sheds light on the psychological and cultural fragmentation experienced by immigrants. Divakaruni's portrayal of Tilo's eventual resolution to embrace her unique identity with Raven reflects a hopeful vision of diasporic resilience and the potential for creating new, hybrid forms of belonging. This perspective aligns with broader discussions on migration, multiculturalism, and the dynamic evolution of diasporic communities in a globalized world.

Literary review

The literary review explores the interplay of culture and identity within postcolonial and diasporic contexts, drawing upon significant theoretical frameworks. The relationship between culture, as a social construct, and identity, as a fluid sense of self, has been extensively examined through the works of key thinkers such as Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Gayatri Spivak. These theorists address the fragmented, hybrid, and contested nature of identity, which is shaped by historical, social, and political forces.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space emphasizes cultural hybridity, where identities are formed in the interstitial spaces between cultures. This framework challenges binary oppositions and highlights the creation of new cultural meanings through negotiation and resistance. Stuart Hall's examination of identity rejects essentialism, proposing that identities are historically contingent, situational, and marked by heterogeneity. His critique of national identity underscores its exclusionary nature and advocates for the recognition of cultural diversity and fluidity.

Gayatri Spivak's work foregrounds the subaltern voice, particularly the marginalized position of women within colonial and postcolonial narratives. Her concept of the subaltern as silenced by both colonial and patriarchal structures reveals the intersections of power and identity. Spivak's argument for "writing the body" highlights the subaltern's need for self-representation to challenge dominant discourses.

The diasporic experience, as examined by scholars such as Meena Alexander, Avtar Brah, and Robin Cohen, further complicates notions of identity. Diaspora fosters hybridity, dislocation, and nostalgia, resulting in identities that are neither fixed nor wholly assimilated. The concept of "home" as a mythic construct reflects the diasporic individual's dual attachment to their origins and their present realities. This dynamic creates a kaleidoscopic identity that bridges multiple cultural influences.

Postcolonial literature often grapples with the themes of alienation, resistance, and hybridity, as seen in the works of Salman Rushdie and other prominent writers. These texts illustrate the tensions between colonial

legacies and contemporary realities, revealing how identities are shaped by historical trauma, migration, and globalization.

The literary review establishes that culture and identity are deeply intertwined, evolving through continuous negotiation and adaptation. It highlights the transformative power of hybridity, the significance of resistance to hegemonic narratives, and the critical role of self-representation in challenging dominant cultural paradigms. Through this lens, literature and theory collaboratively provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities of identity in a globalized, postcolonial world.

Objectives of the study

1. To discuss cultural assimilation of the colonials.
2. To comprehend the alienation and displacement in the socio-cultural context.
3. To postulate the study of internationality and cross-cultural boundaries.
4. To focus the various issues of Indo-Americans in the unaccustomed land.
5. To marginalize the study of diaspora through the text.

Research Methodology

The research paper is applied literary research method in this investigation. The scrutinization of texts is presented post-colonial approach to demonstrate diaspora in different shades. The primary and secondary sources are used to present critical overview of theoretical maneuvers. These are in the form of original texts, critical overview, journals, and reference materials. The analysis of work shows the gravity of post-colonial literature and civilization. The methodology aids careful attention to high light major contribution of authors. The study is emphasis on significant of textual history and background. This research proposes bounteous evidence from the reviews, journal articles and critical analyses the hybridity and communal existence in the selected novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The modus of data collection covers library resources, virtual resources and access to journals on Indian English Diasporic Literature. Electronic data banks such as scholarly, SCOPUS, and research Gate are also retrieved.

Thematic Schemes

1. Culture and Identity

- **Interdependence:** Culture shapes identity by providing a framework of norms, values, and traditions, while identity reflects an individual or group's self-perception within a cultural milieu.
- **Fluidity of Identity:** Identity is not static but is shaped and reshaped through social, cultural, and historical processes.

- **Hybridity:** Postcolonial hybridity emerges from the intersection of diverse cultures, creating new forms of identity that resist assimilation.

2. Post-colonialism and Hybridity

- **The Third Space:** Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space* highlights the in-betweenness of cultures, where colonial and native identities converge, leading to cultural negotiation and resistance.
- **Mimicry and Resistance:** Mimicry subverts colonial authority by imitating and simultaneously mocking it, creating space for hybrid identities to challenge dominance.
- **Diaspora and Displacement:** Migrant and diasporic identities reflect fragmentation and alienation, as individuals navigate between their origins and new cultural landscapes.

3. Gender and Marginalization

- **Silencing of the Subaltern:** Gayatri Spivak critiques the dual oppression of native women under patriarchy and colonialism, arguing that subaltern women's resistance often manifests through disrupted narratives or symbolic acts.
- **Gendered Experiences of Migration:** Women face unique challenges during migration, including cultural displacement and the struggle to reconcile their roles within patriarchal systems.

4. Race and Multiculturalism

- **New Ethnicities:** Stuart Hall's idea of "new ethnicities" rejects essentialist notions of black and white identities, emphasizing heterogeneity and interconnectedness.
- **Multicultural Citizenship:** Will Kymlicka and others advocate for inclusive societies where cultural differences coexist without hierarchy.

5. Power Dynamics and Colonial Discourse

- **Colonial Oppression:** Power structures inherent in colonialism impose dominant cultures while marginalizing native ones.
- **Nationalism vs. Globalization:** Postcolonial studies critique nationalism's exclusionary tendencies and explore how globalization reshapes cultural practices and identities.

6. Memory and the Myth of Home

- **Nostalgia and Yearning:** Avtar Brah and Robin Cohen view "home" as a mythical place of origin, representing both longing and alienation for diasporic communities.

- **Temporal Displacement:** The inability to return to a cohesive past contributes to fragmented identities.

7. Intersectionality and Fragmentation

- **Multiple Identities:** Foucault and Lacan explore how intersecting factors like race, gender, and class produce fractured, transient identities.
- **Subaltern and Textual Mutiny:** The subaltern's position is marked by resistance, and its power lies in disrupting dominant narratives.

Result /findings

The findings from the thematic analysis reveal that culture and identity are deeply intertwined, with identity being shaped by cultural frameworks and societal structures. Postcolonial hybridity, as conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha, highlights the existence of an *in-between* space where cultures intersect, resist, and negotiate, resulting in the formation of new hybrid identities. The concept of mimicry destabilizes colonial authority, enabling the colonized to challenge dominant narratives.

Diaspora and displacement lead to fragmented identities as individuals navigate between their origins and the need to assimilate into new cultural contexts. Gendered experiences of migration, as emphasized by Gayatri Spivak, uncover the compounded oppression faced by women, who are marginalized by both patriarchy and colonial structures. Stuart Hall's notion of *new ethnicities* underlines the heterogeneity of identities, rejecting essentialist definitions and promoting multiculturalism as a framework for coexistence.

Race and power dynamics are critical, as the colonial and postcolonial worlds often reinforce inequalities. Nationalism is seen as exclusionary, homogenizing diverse cultural identities, while globalization and multiculturalism offer opportunities to rethink and renegotiate cultural practices. The diasporic experience is marked by nostalgia for a mythic "home," reflecting a yearning for stability amidst alienation.

Overall, the study underscores the transient, fluid, and intersectional nature of identity, shaped by race, gender, class, and cultural negotiation, while also highlighting resistance and adaptation as key elements in postcolonial and diasporic experiences.

The discussion highlights the intricate interplay between culture and identity, emphasizing their dynamic and mutable nature, especially within postcolonial and diasporic contexts. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and the *third space* foregrounds the negotiation and resistance that occur in cultural intersections, creating new identities that challenge traditional binaries of colonizer and colonized. This hybrid space is not merely an assimilation but a transformative process, as seen in mimicry, which destabilizes colonial authority

by blending deference with subversion. Similarly, Stuart Hall's articulation of *new ethnicities* rejects essentialist notions of identity, advocating for a recognition of diversity within communities and a move towards multicultural coexistence.

Diasporic identities are marked by dislocation, alienation, and a yearning for a mythic homeland, which is often irretrievable, leading to fragmented selfhoods. Gender further complicates this narrative, with Gayatri Spivak highlighting how women, as subaltern figures, navigate dual oppressions of patriarchy and colonialism. The inability of marginalized voices to directly confront dominant structures underscores the nuanced struggles within postcolonial identities. Additionally, race and class emerge as significant determinants, where colonial legacies perpetuate power imbalances, and globalization reshapes cultural practices through interconnected networks.

The discourse also critiques nationalism for its homogenizing tendencies, which marginalize diverse cultural expressions in favor of a singular identity. Postcolonial studies, through the works of critics like Ania Loomba, interrogate these exclusions, aligning themselves with broader discussions of globalization and its impact on cultural formations. The thematic threads collectively reveal that identity is fluid, constantly shaped by socio-political and cultural forces, while resistance, adaptation, and hybridity remain central to understanding postcolonial and diasporic experiences. This exploration not only deepens the understanding of individual and collective identities but also reflects on broader issues of power, representation, and agency in a globalized world.

Discussion

The discussion of culture and identity reveals their interdependent and ever-evolving nature, particularly within the frameworks of postcolonial and diasporic studies. Culture, as a collective way of life, and identity, as an individual or collective sense of self, are shown to be fluid constructs shaped by historical, social, and political forces. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the *third space* underscores the negotiation and transformation that occur at the intersections of different cultures, leading to the creation of hybrid identities. This hybridity disrupts fixed binaries such as colonizer/colonized or native/foreigner, illustrating the fluidity and complexity of cultural identities. Bhabha's notion of mimicry further highlights how such hybrid identities can simultaneously conform to and subvert dominant cultural narratives, challenging colonial authority.

Stuart Hall's idea of *new ethnicities* rejects essentialist views of identity and emphasizes the heterogeneity and dynamism within cultural and racial groups. He argues that identity is shaped by diverse experiences and interactions, transcending geographical and historical boundaries. This resonates with the diasporic condition, where individuals navigate feelings of dislocation and alienation, often clinging to an imagined or mythic homeland while adapting to their current realities. Gender adds another layer of complexity, as

Gayatri Spivak's work reveals how women, particularly in colonized contexts, are doubly marginalized by patriarchal and colonial structures. Spivak's assertion that the subaltern "writes her body" to resist silence exemplifies how identity can serve as a site of resistance and reclamation.

The intersection of race, class, and gender further complicates identity formation, particularly in diasporic and postcolonial contexts. For instance, black and Asian immigrants in England embody hybrid identities, neither fully assimilating into British culture nor remaining entirely tied to their origins. This state of in-betweenness challenges traditional notions of cultural purity and underscores the transformative potential of multicultural interactions. Critics like Avtar Brah and Robin Cohen extend this idea by framing "home" as a conceptual rather than a physical space, emphasizing its symbolic significance in the diasporic imagination.

The discussion also critiques nationalism and its tendency to homogenize identities under the guise of unity, often marginalizing cultural diversity. Postcolonial studies, as Ania Loomba suggests, align with the discourses of globalization and multiculturalism to examine how interconnected systems of power shape cultural practices and identities. This exploration of identity as a product of intersecting socio-political, cultural, and historical forces illustrates its instability and fluidity. Ultimately, the discourse reveals that identity is not a static or monolithic concept but a complex and contested site where resistance, adaptation, and hybridity continuously reshape the boundaries of selfhood and belonging in a globalized world.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the intricate relationship between culture and identity is marked by constant negotiation, adaptation, and transformation, particularly in the context of postcolonialism and diasporic studies. Identity, far from being a static construct, evolves through historical, social, and political influences, shaped by interactions with class, race, gender, and global forces. The theoretical contributions of Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Gayatri Spivak illuminate the fluidity and hybridity inherent in identity formation. Bhabha's concept of the *third space* highlights how cultures and identities merge to create something new, while Hall's emphasis on heterogeneity challenges essentialist perspectives, and Spivak foregrounds the double marginalization of women in postcolonial contexts.

The diasporic condition further underscores identity's fluid nature, where dislocation and nostalgia for a mythic homeland coexist with the realities of adaptation and hybridity. Critiques of nationalism and its exclusionary tendencies, alongside insights from multiculturalism and globalization, emphasize the need to view identity as a dynamic and multifaceted construct. Ultimately, the discourse affirms that culture and identity are not fixed entities but evolving frameworks shaped by resistance, interaction, and the blending of diverse influences, redefining the meaning of belonging in an interconnected world.

Further scope

The research paper is limited with social and cosmopolitans segments of study the diaspora in the text *The Mistress of Spices*. This will be scrutinized the post- colonial sense of belonging. This will lead the future scope for researchers to enhance their work on comparative study of old diaspora and the new diaspora. This diaspora will also help to comprehend the modules of literary point of view. In this, the study will also appeal for further research on exiles, refugees and banished societies from the developing nations. These people are also experienced commune disturbance. Through this, the research will be analyzed the area of downtrodden and ruined society in the world. The significance of the study will also postulate the contradiction and comparison between bank corrupt and economically settled countries.

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