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Female Identity amid Diasporic Fiction: A Comparative Study of Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* and Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*

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Abstract:

The present study focuses on the concept of female identity in diasporic fiction. After migration, women get doubly displaced from their home as well as homeland. This displacement sometimes helps women to become liberated but this can also lead to their breakdown. The two texts which are taken up for the comparative study are Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* and Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*. *The Immigrant* is the story of transformation of Nina and her quest for autonomy and identity in the hostland. Her distressing marital relationship and her immigrant experiences play a significant role in her identity formation and re-formation. *Queen of Dreams* deals with the conflicts of Rakhi, pertaining to her identity. Her unsettling and inscrutable familial relationships and the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre leads to the transformation and re-formation of Rakhi's identity. This research paper as a comparative analysis attempts to describe the similarities and contrasts between the above mentioned two texts.

Keywords: Female identity, migration, immigrant experiences, familial relationships, marital bond.

Introduction:

In present times, due to globalisation and technological expansion, societies have become multicultural and multiethnic. Transnational migration is one of the significant aspects of the contemporary world. The experience of migrants depends upon many factors. It varies from generation to generation. The attitude of the host countries and the causes that lead to migration are some of the major factors that affect the life of migrants in the host country. In the age of globalisation, there is less physical dislocation than mental dislocation. Even though migrants face external problems like discrimination, assimilation, cultural changes, adaptation, struggle for survival, and identity crisis, their own inner problems like loneliness and alienation cause more suffering to them. These problems are inextricable for the diasporic community. Psychological pressures and different set of cultural expectations often bring marginalisation in the host country. Along with these problems, the question of identity has become a serious issue in diaspora. It is combined with ambiguousness, pluralities and multi-layeredness. The search of identity is one of the prominent themes of the contemporary diasporic literature.

Indian Diaspora is the outcome of colonisation and decolonisation. It is one of the largest diaspora in the world with its global presence. The Indian diasporic women writers have a significant place in Indian Diasporic Writing. Bharathi Mukherjee, Chitra Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Nayantara Sahgal, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Meena Alexander and Sunetra Gupta are some of the prominent Indian diasporic women writers. Diasporic women writers depict the cultural dilemmas, the generational differences, and the change in identities during dislocation. Women are deeply attached to their homeland and they are caught physically

between two worlds. Their experiences of living in-between condition are very painful and that results in bafflement and disorientation. Women from 1970s onwards chose literature to pour out their experiences comparatively on a large scale as compared to the earlier times. Women's life in diasporic situation can be doubly painful. They struggle with insecurities of exile, along with the demands of family and work, and also with the conflict of tradition and modernity. Shrawan K Sharma rightly demonstrates that, "The Western women explore individual's identity in highly commercialised technological sense, while Indian women seek their identity within the family matrix" (3). However, the condition of women is changing with time. They have now realised that there is more to life than merely depending on marriage, husband, parents, children and conventional value system. The quotation of R. S. Pathak rightly captures the journey of the modern Indian women; "Her quest for identity is spiritual odysseys of the modern man who has lost his social and spiritual moorings and who is anxious to search roots" (57). The focus is now more on woman's inner world rather than man. The situation of migration and hybrid culture has become a relief as well as a threat to the identity of woman.

The contemporary Indian women writers do not present the deprived and pitiable Indian women in their writings rather they deal with, in words of Neetu Bhatia, "complex psychological problems on day-to-day basis." Marriage and the dynamics of love-hate relationship in the life of married couples, the freedom of women from social conventions, their quest for identity and autonomy, gender inequality, gender discrimination, the relationship of husband and wife not as equals but as slave and master, struggle between tradition and modernity, and so on are some of the prominent themes in the works of the diasporic women writers. Ashalata Kulkarni in "Gender Representation in the Diasporic Indian English" writes that women writers view gender from woman's point of view and thus extend the boundaries of human experiences from different perspectives and dimensions. The issue of identity is very crucial for women. Her autonomy and individuality is never considered or thought-of. Some believe that migration is doubly painful for women while on the other hand some are of the view that it helps them to become self-supportive and free. Migration offers them freedom but at the same time they lose a stable identity. The woman in the contemporary world has started exploring and asserting their own identity. There is a quest for self-definition in them and now they want to assert their individuality and act independently.

Emma Parker in "Introduction: Unsettling Women" pointed the idea that, "As Diaspora Studies has developed, feminists have paid particular attention to how gender shapes both the material experience of migration and the ways in which diaspora is conceived and represented in gendered terms" (3). Regarding this Avtar Brah also points out that, woman are perceived as the embodiment of "culture" and "tradition" in both the homeland and the hostland (12), and she also argues that the construction of "difference" in discourses of nation is a gendered phenomena (15). The experiences and issues which are shared in diasporic literature are mostly androcentric. Holding same view, Gayatri Gopinath also observes that —all too often diasporas are narrativized through the bonds of relationality between men" (3). Binary oppositions between men and women are created. Women are always seen as "the other" in relation to the men who are always considered as "the centre" of the society. The concept of male supremacy in society has entered the literary sphere as well. Not only women but women's writing was always subjected to discrimination, disapproval and negligence. The relationship of man and woman is always like the relationship of centre-margin. But with the advent of modernisation and globalisation, they

are also discussed and studied in different forms of literature. With the passing of time they show an inexorable awakening of identity.

Dr. Beena Agarwal points out that, on one hand the phenomena of migration has helped to break the barriers of traditions; it has also made the life of Indian woman more complex. Indian woman with her traditional moral consciousness and limited professional skills find herself more isolated and insecure (10). The process of formation of identities continuously morphs. It keeps on shifting. As Avtar Brah suggests, such variable identities are “constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (183). The notion of identity has come up for the question in recent times, as global and transnational identities has evolved. The issue of race, class, gender, plays an important role in the construction of identity. The problems faced by men and women are different after migration. Sometimes women become more liberated and sometimes it breaks them when they come so far after leaving behind their family because it is believed that they are more attached or concerned about their families as compared to men. The issue of female identity has been dealt by many diasporic women writers from different perspectives and dimensions. The journey of the diasporic women after migration is two-folded journey: the journey into the inner self and also the outer journey. They present the dilemma which women face in the alien land. Earlier, mainly before globalisation identity was taken as a coherent and integrated concept, but now these assumptions about identity are questioned and they have become problematical with the change in the world due to globalisation. Identities have now become elusive, flexible, and resistant to control. Identity formation is a dynamic process and identities have now become open for change, transformation and growth. In the age of globalisation and multiculturalism, identities are continually shifting and transforming.

Authors and their respective Texts:

The two texts which are analysed in order to find out various factors that influence and affects identity formation are *The Immigrant* by Manju Kapur and *Queen of Dreams* by Chitra Divakaruni. Manju Kapur is a Delhi-based Indian novelist. In most of her novels she crushes and defies the patriarchal restrictions and expectations to assert her identity and achieves self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment in her life. *The Immigrant* is the story of transformation of Nina and her quest for autonomy and identity in the hostland. Her disturbing marital relationship and her immigrant experiences play significant role in her identity formation. On the other hand, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a famous Indian American author. Her works mainly focus on the experiences of the South-Asian immigrants, and their related problems of adoption and adaptation. *Queen of Dreams* deals with the conflicts of Rakhi, the protagonist, pertaining to her identity. Her unsettling and confusing familial relationships and the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre leads to the transformation and re-formation of Rakhi's identity.

Manju Kapur and Chitra Divakaruni in their respective novels, depicts the disturbance and pains of the diasporic community mainly through their female protagonist. All of Manju Kapur's novels take place in the family background. In an interview Manju Kapur states,

Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts; it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surfaces at social and economic forces, gender relationship and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home. (Singh)

All the societal and cultural constructions are by the patriarchy and women are generally not allowed to question. On the other hand, Chitra Divakaruni's themes include the experiences of Indian migrant women, and their challenges of living in a multi-cultural world. H. Saheen writes that she has grabbed with contemporary issues and a variety of themes—motherhood, marriage, individuation, class-conflicts, marginalisation, woman as wife, mother, sister, and lastly, yet significantly woman as human, not just a sex object. Striving for identity in the postcolonial world, her protagonist presents the modern day woman (46). The female characters in the works of Divakaruni are those women who are caught between tradition and modernity. They question the nature of their lives, their roles as mother, wife, sister and daughter. Chitra Divakaruni is herself an immigrant and she depicts the immigrant experiences in her novels. On the other hand, Manju Kapur depicts the immigrant experiences without being one. This makes her exceptional. Generally, only those writers depict the immigrant experiences who themselves suffer the trauma and tribulations of being an immigrant.

Analysis:

Manju Kapur's *The Immigrant* and Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* have some analogous issues and some differences which makes them comparable. There are various external and internal factors, which pertain to the identity of the female protagonists of both the novels. Both the writers' in their respective novels portray the issues and struggles faced by the migrants and particularly the women migrants.

The identity of female protagonists of both the novels, *The Immigrant* and *Queen of Dreams*, that are Nina and Rakhi respectively are affected by a number of factors which leads into the transformation of their identity in the end of the novel. Breaking down the matrimonial discourses and living life on their own terms is the major factor in their transformation. Both the texts portray the struggle of women who marry due to societal pressures, but when they find the marital bond suffocating and overpowering their individuality and identity, they move out of it and initiate divorce. Migration helps them to become liberated and they break conventional norms related to marriage.

In traditional countries like India, marriage is considered very important and divorce is looked down and widows are pitied because divorce is still a taboo in India. It carries a strong stigma. Couples often prefer to remain in an unhappy marriage in order to protect their image as an "ideal Indian family", regardless of the pain marriage may bring each day. If husband and wife are not getting along, the wife is always expected to adjust and make things work. Some amount of flexibility is expected in every relationship but in Indian society, this burden mostly falls on the wife. The protagonist of *Queen of Dreams*, Rakhi is a second generation immigrant. She is confident enough to live her life alone and on her own terms without any dependence. She breaks her marital bond and moves ahead in life. However, she cannot completely detach herself from her husband even after divorce because of their mutual interest, their daughter Jona, who still loves and likes the company of her father. Sometimes Rakhi longs for manly love and care. Divorce affects Rakhi economically and emotionally. However, she overcomes this loss with time but initially it also brings a crisis in her identity.

On the other hand, Nina's dream of a living a happy married life shatters soon when she encounters Ananda's sexual difficulties. Even after many attempts of explaining and preparing Ananda for the medical tests, she fails to convince him. The gap and distance in their relationship emerge. Both indulge in extra marital relationships, which again is the outcome of their presence in a developed nation. Indulging in such kind of affairs is an easy

task in the Western societies. When she came to Canada, she was socially, economically and culturally dependent on Ananda, “She couldn’t free herself from her husband. Her sense of security in Canada is with him” (328). As Carolyn Heilbrun writes in her book, *Reinventing Motherhood* that “the price of wifehood is the abandonment of self” (178). However, Nina prefers her happiness rather than being a wife and losing her identity. She then decides to leave Ananda and breaks the nuptial bond. She does not want to continue a relationship that is suffocating and depressing. Migration helps her in becoming bold and self-assured woman. Initially, as all newly married girls think, she also felt that marriage would bring her everything, love, care, security, happiness but soon all her pre-assumptions about a happy marriage ends on a bitter note. She moves out of it and decides to lead a life on her own.

Nina and Rakhi initiate divorce and move out of the conjugal bond by breaking up the stereotypes related to divorce. Anna Sandfield also writes that in the West, “the link between marriage and respectability has relatively weakened during the 20th century, although negative discourses on divorce persist, blaming and excluding women from social interaction” (157). Women of the contemporary world have their own aspirations and dreams, which no longer fit into the feminine roles of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’. They carve their own identity as an individual rather depending on the institution of marriage.

Motherhood and children also plays a significant role in Nina and Rakhi’s life and in the transformation of their identity. Rakhi has a daughter named Jona, whom she loves very much. Jona gives a purpose to her life. She is a possessive mother and does not like when her daughter meets Sonny. On the contrary, Nina has no one except Ananda in Canada. She misses her home and friends and feels alienated and disoriented. Therefore, Nina longs for a child so that she can overcome her loneliness in the hostland. She thinks coming of child in her life will give her a purpose to live in this alien land and it might fill all the gaps in their marital relationship and will give them a reason to be together, “She wanted a child to settle down, to give her days to focus in this new country. What was she to do with her time” (168-9). However, Ananda's sexual inadequacies make her unable to conceive. She tries to do everything which she can to solve his sexual problem but all in vain. The cement of children lacks in their marriage. Later, she postpones her decision of becoming a mother and focus on becoming financially independent and becomes conscious of her own life and identity rather than just being wife and mother. She rightly thinks that, “We are conditioned to think a woman’s fulfilment lies in birth and motherhood, just as we are conditioned to feel failures if we don’t marry” (230). Getting married, and after that being a wife and a mother are considered as the soul duty of a woman in the conventional societies. But Nina and Rakhi discards all these pre-determined roles assigned to woman.

In both the novels, the role of mother is very significant. In Nina and Rakhi’s case, their identity is also dependent on the mother-daughter bond. Nina has no one in her life except her mother. However, her mother forces her to get married because she thinks that presence of man is very important in a woman’s life. She is patriarchate in nature, “Her mother was such a vehicle of patriarchy, why was her concern for her daughter always expressed through worry about Ananda’s well-being?” (242).

Contrastingly, Rakhi’s mother is very different. She never forces Rakhi and always accepts her decisions. Like her mother, she also wants to be a dream interpreter. But her mother never allows anyone to come between her dream-interpreting job, not even her husband and her daughter. This disturbs Rakhi and her sense of identification with her mother loses. Her mother dies leaving her in the midst of all the confusions and conflict. On one hand, Rakhi wants to be just like her mother and on the other hand, she did not like her

mother's dominance in every field of her life. She does not like her mother's presence in the Cha House. She feels that "the Cha-House is her sanctuary—the one place which she has made on her own" (47). Rakhi's mother, in order to avoid a split in Rakhi's identity intentionally hides her past from Rakhi. Later, with the help of her mother's journals she gets to know about her mother's life and her past in India. Nina and Rakhi's mother influences them in most of their important decisions of life. Nina's mother forces her to marry and that too with a NRI. Rakhi's relationship with all of her family members disturbs due to her mother's dream interpreting talent.

Nina and Rakhi amid their struggling lives have interest in some alternative ways of self-expression and it is a significant part of their identity. Art and literature are important part of their identity. Rakhi likes painting and wants to be a successful painter. Nina loves reading books. These are vital parts of their life and both the writers have given ample details to show their love for painting and reading. Ananda taunts Nina that the books have taken her away from the reality and she lives in a kind of fictional world. Books play a noteworthy part in Nina's identity formation. She loves to live in the realm of books than the reality. On the other hand, painting is integral part of Rakhi's life and identity. Painting is an alternate medium of eloquence and self-articulation for her. Rakhi realises that somehow she likes to preserve past through her paintings whereas her mother dreams of future. She realises that she is different from her mother. Whereas for Nina reading is an integral part of her life and for her books are the best company a person can have, "With a book how could she be lonely" (135). Painting and literature are imperative part of their identity, which fill the emotional void of their lives.

The upbringing of a person is a key factor in the development of identity. A person's development is directly proportional to the surroundings and culture in which he or she lives. The upbringing of Rakhi and Nina are different. Rakhi is born and brought in America, whereas Nina migrates to Canada after her marriage to a NRI. For Rakhi, America is her homeland. As a second-generation migrant, she takes America as her home. However, the behaviour of the Americans towards the immigrants after the attack on the World Trade Centre shocks her. She feels insecure, rootless and branchless after the violence inflicted on them by the natives. Doris Kezia states that:

Man is known as a social animal that needs some home, love of parents, friends and relatives. But when he is un-homed, he loses the sense of belongingness and thus suffers from sense of insecurity, identity crisis and alienation. (53)

On the other hand, Nina's upbringing is Indian but her migration helps her to become a confident and bold woman. She defies all the social and cultural norms related to marriage, motherhood and wifehood in the end.

Erik Erikson in *Identity and the life Cycle* writes that identity is both formed and manifested through social relationships (111). Apart from the above mentioned factors, the familial relationships in both the novels play a significant role in the construction of their identity. Firstly, Nina's mother plays a significant role in her life. She loves her mother and she has no one except her mother in her life. Secondly, after the marriage, she becomes emotionally, economically, and culturally dependent on Ananda. Eventually, her mother dies in the hostland and she decides to leave her husband who fails as a husband. In the end, she realises that she cannot depend on anyone for her happiness and contentment. She has to lead her own life and on her own terms.

On the other hand, Rakhi's disturbing familial relationships are important factor in determining her identity. Her mother plays a significant role in her life that influences her identity. She wants to be like her mother. Although, her mother maintains a gap with her daughter and her husband so that her dreaming talent do not suffer. This disturbs Rakhi and it leads to a malfunctioning family. Along with from her mother, Rakhi's relationship with her daughter, father and Sonny is not harmonious. After her mother's death, she gets a chance to know her father. Her father is more approachable to her but earlier her fondness for her mother had created a gap between the father and daughter relationship. Her daughter is also an enigma for her like her mother. However, after the attack of 9/11 she came to know that the gift of interpreting dreams has passed to her daughter Jona. She leaves her husband Sonny because of his inability to save her in the nightclub when a man was raping her. However, with the passage of time, she realises that her daughter, father, mother and Sonny are not as ambiguous as she thought. Rakhi's words in the end depict a new ray of hope for her relationship with Sonny. Rakhi become more understanding and mature in the end of the novel. All her disturbed relationships are resolved in the end. Therefore, both Rakhi and Nina transform in the end resolving their confusions in their familial and marital ties.

Queen of Dreams and *The Immigrant* depicts the problems and experiences of the migrants which leads in the transformation and re-formation of their identity. For immigrants the question of identity is a difficult one. Especially for those who are culturally displaced. Immigrants face identity crisis when they migrate to another country. There is no single or unified identity for immigrants. Instead, dual and multiple identities are gaining prominence in the contemporary world. Stuart Hall writes,

Identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, other intersections and antagonistic, discourse, practices and positions. (Hall, Who Needs 4)

The conflict of the hostland and homeland and the cultural differences creates identity crisis in Nina and Rakhi's life. They constantly struggle for a stable and unified identity. However, in the end they realise that there is no cohesive or unified identity for an immigrant.

The immigrants initially face many difficulties in the hostland which results in their identity crisis. When migrants move to the hostland, they have to struggle for economic independence and social acceptance in the host country. Rakhi and Nina are middle-aged women and belong to middle-class family. They belong to the same social strata. They struggle to overcome the financial hitches. Nina and Rakhi both want to be economically independent. However, Rakhi as a single parent and as an immigrant has an urgency to become financially independent. The foremost problem, which every migrant faces in the hostland is to find a source of livelihood in the hostland. The struggle for survival is an important part of the lives of the immigrants. Rakhi has no family support, as she lives alone there after divorce. On the other hand, initially, Nina wants to work to remove her boredom and dullness from her monotonous life in the hostland. However, with the passage of time when complications start arising in her marital relationship she realises that she has to become economically independent. She cannot depend on her husband all her life. She has to become financially independent. She joins library school in order to become a professional librarian.

Racial discrimination is an inescapable issue for the diasporic community. Even though the people in the settled society are cultured and educated, they are not able to getaway discrimination. The diasporic community always remains a minority community,

this leads to their discrimination. Bill Ashcroft *et al* writes in *The Key Concepts of Postcolonial Studies* that migrants live a “complex existence” that forces them to confront and rework different hegemonic constructions of identity developed in their home or new nation state(s) and “reterritorialize” their practises as well as their identities (201). Immigrants are discriminated on various levels, such as socially, religiously, culturally, politically and economically. Both Nina and Rakhi become victims of racial discrimination. Their race and the colour of their skin make them victims in the eyes of the natives of the hostland.

In spite of being born in America and living there all her life, Rakhi and all her friends and relatives are considered as terrorist by the natives. Sesay Kwame Dawes writes in *Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women's Writing* about immigrants, “They were born there or have grown up there all their life. They are uncomfortable with the notion of a home elsewhere for they have no sense of exile. Their sole exile is the exile within their own home country” (28). Even the country of their birth does not accept them as their natives. After the attack of 9\11 on the World Trade Centre in America, all the Indians and particularly the Sikhs were treated as criminals and terrorists. They are abused and insulted for wearing turban. To avoid discrimination and violence by the natives, Sonny suggests Rakhi to wear western clothes and hang an American flower outside her cafe and house. However, Rakhi thinks that, “I don't have to put up a flag to show that I'm American” (267). Rakhi's sense of being an American loses after the attack. She questions her own identity, “If I am not American then who I am?” (271). When anything wrong happens in the host country, the immigrants are always targeted and stereotyped.

On the other hand, Nina becomes the victim of racial discrimination at the airport. She wonders, “Why were people so silent about the humiliation in the West? She does not like her introduction to the new world” (105). People at the airport treat her like a criminal. She is aware of the fact that they are doing this because she is from the third world. As a wife and as an immigrant, it is difficult for her to settle down in the new place as Manju Kapur mentions in the text, “The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future...at present all she is a wife, a wife alone for many hours” (122). She becomes confused about her identity, “A woman, an Indian, an immigrant. Which came first?” (218). Her sense of identity loses. However, with passing time, she adjusts well and tries to gain full assimilation in order to avoid discrimination.

Initially, Nina and Rakhi both face dilemma and struggle for finding and establishing a unique identity. However, with the passage of time, Rakhi and Nina, faces the difficulties and harshness with a greater strength. In the case of the diasporic community, as Rakhi and Nina, they cannot be fully part of the homeland's cultural practices nor the settled land's cultural practices. They become hybrid individuals. Migration results in the construction of the multiple identities. As Stuart Hall writes that in the course of time immigrants realise that their identities are “never singular but multiple” (4). Rakhi and Nina in the end accept that they cannot possess a unified identity rather they have to accept their hyphenated identity.

Nostalgia is a common sentiment amongst members of the diasporic community. The immigrants are the displaced and dislocated people. In *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction*, Roberta Rubenstein comments that nostalgia signifies “the expression of yearning for an earlier time or place or a significant person in one's history, the memory and significance of which or whom contributes to the sense of the self in the present moment” (25). Initially, Nina compares India to Canada and

finds it more clean and healthy. Initially, she enjoys the sluggishness and idleness in the hostland. However, after few months she feels lonely and depressed. She misses the over crowded streets of New Delhi and all the dirt and dust of India, “She longed to breathe the foul air, longed to sit in a scooter-rickshaw and have every bone in her body jolted. Home—that is what she wanted” (177). She misses the sense of belonging and community. Later, she finds her sense of community in, “The colleagues of HRL, the women’s group that encouraged her to be angry and assertive, Beth, Gayatri, Library School; the sense of community was there, warming but temporary—everything temporary” (330). They all give her a sense of community and help her overcoming the feeling of alienation.

On the other hand, Rakhi hungers for all the things that are related to India and she wants to go to India at least for once before she dies. She likes to paint about India, “I hungered for all the things that are Indian because my mother never spoke of the country just as she never spoke of her past” (35). The immigrants in the settled land try to create “imaginary homelands” which are culturally and traditionally similar to the homes they left. Nina and Rakhi both relate to India directly or indirectly, Nina is born there and has spent thirty-years of her life in India and Rakhi’s parents are from Calcutta who migrated to California for better job and livelihood. Their connection and belongingness from two countries torn them and make them bewildered.

Immigrant adapts the culture of the hostland in order to gain full assimilation. The diasporic community of the first-generation do not discard the age-old cultural patterns of their homeland completely. However, the immigrants of the second and third are more flexible in their approach, in order to gain full assimilation they reject the culture of their homeland. Initially, Nina feels all the clichéd problems faced by all the immigrants. The problem related to food, dressing and culture. She is embarrassed for wearing heavy Indian saree by her husband. Ananda forces her to eat non-vegetarian along with his uncle’s family. She joins a women’s group and the Library School in an attempt to mingle into the host country as soon as possible, as Ananda always suggest her, “When in Rome do as Romans do.” In the process of assimilation and adaption they feel disoriented and dislocated. Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* writes that, migrant’s straddles between two cultures...they suffer “a triple disruption” comprising the loss of roots and the social dislocation (277-278). Ananda believes in full assimilation and he discards her old ways of living. He adapts the culture and tradition of the host culture. He rejects everything that relates him to her old life in the homeland. His uncle also believes in complete assimilation and thinks of himself as a Canadian but unlike Ananda, he visits Indian clubs in order make his children aware of their roots.

On the other hand, Rakhi’s mother is a first generation migrant who does not discard her old ways of living. She wears Indian clothes and cooks Indian food in order to retain her Indianness. Rakhi as a second-generation immigrant has curiosity to know about her parent’s Indian past. However, her parents and particularly her mother do not tell her anything about her past life in order to avoid a split in the identity of Nina. Later in the novel, her father acquaints her with their Indian past through his stories and her wife’s journals. The major factor of displacement of women in diasporic communities is their marriages. They move from homeland to hostland with their husbands, which cannot be considered as a voluntary movement. Although, men come to the foreign land for better education and career purposes. In most cases, the diasporic community thinks that the settled land is a place of opportunities and growth.

Migration helps in bringing changes in the gender relations. In the traditional societies, women are taught to keep silent. They are always expected to be submissive and passive. However, migration of women to the developed countries proves beneficial for them. Betty Friedan reiterates in her book, *The Feminine Mystique* that the idea of “feminine” and “masculine” is artificially created by society. Women try to fit into these ideas, which lead to frustration, dissatisfaction and identity crisis. Migration to developed countries helps Nina and Rakhi in many ways. The status of women is different there as compared to the developing countries like India. In traditional societies like India, women are oppressed and treated like commodities.

Ananda and Nina initially share a very good relationship. However, with the passing time, Ananda behaves like a typical Indian husband. In spite of spending seven years in Canada his mentality does not change. On one hand, he wants to be a modern and cultured man of the Canadian society and on the other hand, he still possesses patriarchal traits in his personality. In Nina and Ananda’s case, there is no big difference in their gender relation. In spite of living there for many years, Ananda’s mentality does not change. He always commands his wife to change according to the culture and society of the hostland, without thinking about her happiness and individuality. He only worries about his impression in the host country, “Here I’m thought of as a cultured man, as Canadian as everybody else. So I don’t want folks to get the wrong impression...That you are a traditional, backward Indian girl, like some of these women you see at the Indian Club. Can’t even speak English properly” (147). He forces her to change her clothes, food habits and language. She leaves her home, her mother, her friends and her job for him, but he does not really care about all this. Instead, he feels proud that due to him, she is living a good and luxurious life and that without doing anything. Nina is not treated as an individual or human being that has her own ambitions, goals and life. But with the passage of time, Nina occupies a new “hybrid” cultural identity. She transforms her identity in the end. Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* writes that new identities are born and the “in between” marginal status of the migrants go “beyond” the “binary fixities” and they carve new “routes” instead of lamenting over the lost roots (112). Her migration helps her in a positive way and made her self-reliant. The novel ends with these lines, “When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, and a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again” (330). She thinks that as an immigrant she can give a fresh start to her life once again.

Similarly, Rakhi divorces her husband without giving him a second chance when she finds him unable to help her. She moves out of the nuptial bond without giving it a second thought. Rakhi is a second generation migrant who is bolder in taking decisions about her marriage and divorce as compared to Nina. Her upbringing in a developed nation has made her brave and courageous to take decisions of her own life. She marries the boy whom she loved in her college days and divorces him when he was unable to help her. However, she becomes more understanding and matures in her relationships in the end. She thinks of giving a second chance to Sonny and asks him to take her to the club again. Rakhi and Sonny’s relationship goes through many highs and lows but in the end, a new hope of love generates between them. Sonny never forces Rakhi to do anything like Ananda who likes giving orders and dominating her wife. Sonny is more liberal in nature as compared to Ananda who cheats his wife and lies to her. Sonny respects his wife’s decisions and never insults her. The women of the diasporic community face initial disorientation and discrimination but in the end, they live a free and independent life on their own terms and conditions.

The concept of identity, which has been studied here with reference to the two female characters Nina and Rakhi, shows that their identity include number of variables like their upbringing, family members, marital bond, financial security, professional stability and social relationships, etc. Identity is a fluid and multi-layered process. It is a continuous process and there are various social roles, which are pre-conceived and pre-fixed in the society, especially in the case of women, they are imposed. However, despite the difficulties and constraints, migration offers women new opportunities and financial independence in addition to improved status.

In conclusion, female Identity in the context of diaspora has fewer tendencies to be generalised as in case of the present comparative study of the women characters of *The Immigrant* and *Queen of Dreams*, and remains mainly a part of personal experiences of the women that register the individuality of them.

Indeed, the problems of Nina, the immigrant here, are very much her own as she does not remain a static state of a woman of nobility and endurance in front of the despicable acts of her infidel and inconsistent husband. The fact that, she too indulges in an extramarital affair with Anton, not out of retaliation to Ananda, but out of her own choice which gives her character dynamics and prudence. She appears real and is not driven by morality. Consequently, she gives divorce to Ananda. On the other hand, Rakhi is not an immigrant rather she is very much an American as the natives of America. She is born and brought up there and imbibes the culture too. Her problems are different from Nina's. The hostland culture evokes markedly different types of responses from the two. It is inseparable to both of them as they have been racially discriminated.

However, two of them see formation of their identity instigated by different factors. For Nina her identity lies more in the external factors like the pressures of society, her mother's aspirations for her marriage and settlement, and her marrying to an NRI for which she moves abroad and becomes an immigrant. On the other end, it is an inner quest and an effort to come into terms with the relationships in her life for Rakhi that could be tracked in the formation of her identity.

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