

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.86

ISSN 0976 - 8165



THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

12th Year of Open Access

Bi-Monthly Refereed and Peer-Reviewed
Open Access e-Journal

Vol. XII, Issue-2 (April 2021)

Editor-In-Chief : Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor : Dr. Madhuri Bite



www.the-criterion.com



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Narrative Proliferations in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel

The Mistress of Spices

Dr. Vibha

Associate Prof. of English
Govt. P.G.College for Women, Panchkula.

Article History: Submitted-04/04/2021, Revised-28/04/2021, Accepted-01/05/2021, Published-05/05/2021.

Abstract:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, author of the award-winning short story collection *Arranged Marriage*, has crafted a fine first novel *The Mistress of Spices*. The novel is written with a masterful mix of flight of fancy combined with everyday grittiness. The story of the novel starts with a girl called Nayantara. Her parents don't want her as she is a girl child. She wanders around her village and she somehow starts making predictions. One day, the pirates come and carry her away. For a few years, she lives with them as pirate queen and they named her, Bhagyavati, bringer of luck. Again she is dissatisfied with her life and wishes for an end. A storm brews and just before she lands in the salty sea, life's sweetness comes back. Managing to survive, she meets the speaking water snakes, the Nagas. Snakes always arrive to save her life. They tell her of the island of the spices where The Old One lives. She reaches the island of spices. She is the strongest student on the island on the island, full of arrogance and life. The life on the island is full of magic and fantasy. And on the final day on the island, it is time to choose a name and a place. Though the Old One, who trained all the mistresses, how to use the spices, named all the mistresses but Nayantara chooses her own -Tillotama or Tilo for short. Tilo chooses her name after the spice Til (Sesame). The present research paper will analyse the journey of Narantara, her desires, wishes and the way writer puts her narrative to highlight the expedition of the small girl to become Mistress of spices. This research paper will refer to Genettes' Narratology to discuss narrative development of the novel.

Keywords: Fancy, predictions, Magic, Spices, narrative, Gerard Genette, Narratology.

Narrative Proliferations in *The Mistress of Spices*.

In the novel, Tillotama is the first-person narrator, *an autodiegetic narrator* telling her own experiences. In the *diegesis* she refers explicitly to her feelings as well as to her relationship with the characters of the narrative and is part of their spoken exchanges. The narrational choice predicates her involvement in the story in that she tells the story as an element of her own experiences. The narrative mechanism of *The Mistress of Spices* involves many narrative levels embedded within each other. To illustrate, the narrative of immigrants contributes to the multi-layered structure of the novel. Genette states that these short narratives embedded within the main narrative compose '*metadiegesis*'. A story within a story becomes a narrative strategy. The first-person pronoun 'I' operates as the tie around which a variety of episodes and referential elaboration, including intrusive opinions about the mental and emotional states of the characters within the matrix of narration, are threaded.

The whole narrative revolves around the main character or the protagonist of the novel i.e Tilottama or Til. The narrative unfolds the various facts and phases of the protagonist and her development as she travels from one location to another. The novel can be divided into six phases. The first phase involves her childhood experiences in her native village. The second phase relates to her experiences with the pirates. The third phase narrates her meeting with snakes. The fourth phase narrates her life on the magical island where she meets the Old One and got training as the mistress of spices. The fifth phase narrates her experiences as mistress of spices in Oakland helping the immigrants with the spices. The sixth phase presents how she was caught between her love towards Raven and her responsibility as mistress of spices. Divakaruni herself explained:

“This book is a metaphor and the characters are metaphorical. But they are also realistic very human. They exist on both levels at once. Tilo, for instance, in her own person, but she is also a metaphor for the struggle between social responsibilities and personal happiness. I wanted the novel to work in that way on several levels simultaneously.”

All the phases are not presented in chronological order. The chronological order in *The Mistress of Spices* is interrupted with the stories of different time periods. The purpose of the fractured narrative order is to introduce to various life periods of the protagonist, Tillotama.

Divakaruni makes uses of *anachronies* to keep different narrative together and provide the reader with the past and present of the protagonist. The *anachronies* in the novel add to the complexity of the protagonist's identity. The novel begins with the passage:

“I am a Mistress Of Spices.

I can work the others too. Mineral, metal, earth and sand and stone... I learned them all on the Island.

But the spices are my love. They are the ones I Work with.” (3)

It is the present moment of the narrative with which the novel begins. The reader is introduced to the heroine in the very beginning. The novel starts in media-res; the first sentence discloses the narrator's profession and also hinted at the magical powers of the heroine.

Writers make strategic use of both *analepsis* and *prolepsis* in telling a story, for the beginning is seldom the best place to begin – stories tend to begin in the middle with analeptic method. Sketching out what went before and proleptic devices hinting at what the outcome will be and thereby engaging the reader and generates the basic narrative momentum. In the novel, there is use of both *analepsis* and *prolepsis*. The movement of *analepsis* and *prolepsis* signal the significant changes in the life of the heroine, Tillotama (Tilo). The first time movement appears in the form of *analepsis*. Past-Oriented temporality, achieved through the narration of the heroine's tale within *analepsis*, emphasizes the importance of establishing a connection with the past of the heroine whose previous experiences are fundamentally significant. The very first *analepsis* appears in the very first chapter which provides information about Tilo's place of birth.

So, it is through *external analepsis* the childhood period of Tilo is presented. She was named Nayantara. The basic thought of the Indians i.e desire for a male child is illustrated: “Wrap her in old cloth, lay her face down on the floor. What does she bring to the family except a dowry dept” (8). She wanders lonely in the village, with no one caring about her. She somehow starts making predictions. She predicts where there will be droughts and where will be floods. Everyone in the village bows down to her: “When I looked at them, grown men trembled and threw themselves at my feet, and that too seemed easy and right and so it was that I grow proud and wilful.”

In the second phase of narrative Tilo recounts the arrival of pirates in her village and this analepsis brings unexpected twist in the novel. The pirates come, burning the village, raping the school girls, stealing whatever they can find and destroying everything else. They see her and carry her away:

"They carried me through the burning village, I dazed by shock and shame, by this new helplessness... The pirate chief's voice lifted above dying moans, giving me in awful irony my new name. Bhagyavati, Bringer of Luck, for so I was to be for them." (19)

The above *external analepsis* illustrates about the changing identity of the heroine that how her name changes. Her parents named her Nayantara and now the pirates named her, Bhagyavati, bringer of luck. Search for identity is the main thematic concern for the diasporic writer's narrative. As the narrative progresses the theme becomes more prominent. The *analepsis* create interest in the reader for the heroine. After reading the first remarks about the childhood experiences of the heroine the readers cannot help feeling sympathy for her because of the cruel treatment she had to endure. Her past is part of her current sphere, making it impossible for her to live simply "in the present" because the present does not exist by itself. The new sense of time is also expressed in the very structure of the text itself, for Divakaruni jumps from one temporal location to another with almost every chapter. As Tilo reflects "sometimes I wonder if there is such a thing as reality, an objective and untouched nature of being. Or if all that we encounter has already been changed by what we had imagined it to be. If we had dreamed it into being."

The third phase in the narrative begins with the heroine's meeting with the snakes. Snakes are symbolically used by Divakaruni, and are picked up from Bengali folk tales. Bengali folktales form an integral part of the narrative. These tales create magical effect in the novel. This narrative technique of using folktales is one of the key and unique elements in the novel. Here it is important to refer to Magical Realism. Magical Realism is a literary technique which explores how different cultures perceive reality. Divakaruni takes us on a journey to that magical world of fantasy. In this novel, Divakaruni makes use of Magical Realism. She mixes her images with the same skill as an Indian housewife makes her special masala curry mix-unique, complex and delicious. The novel is a combination of fancy and realism.

Snakes appear everywhere in the narrative not only in the past time narration but also in the present time narration i.e. repetitive narration. In an interview with Morton Marcus Divakaruni comments:

“The speaking serpents are a different kind of magic that I only partially understand,” She replied.” They represent the grace of the universe, and by that I mean they are not governed by logic but come to us mortals as a blessing we cannot understand.”

Now, begins the fourth phase in the life of the heroine. She reaches the island. This *analepsis* illustrates that she, through the island of spices, thinks that she will be able to reach her destination:

“The island of spice,” I said, and it seemed that I had finally found a name for my wanting. (24)

The protagonist narrates her life on the island through singulative narrative, repetitive narrative and iterative narrative. The use of iterative narrative and repetitive narrative is illustrated:

“Each year a thousand a thousand girls are back from the island.

Each year a thousand girls whose hands have failed them throw
themselves into the sea as they sail home.” (35).

The *analepsis* involves her new journey to the island of spices. It reveals the crucial reasons beneath Bhagyavati metamorphosis into a mistress of spices. The first thing The Old One does, when Bhagyavati reached the island, is to analyse the hands. “It is the hands that call power out of the spices.” The Old One after having a look at the hand of Bhagyavati says: “You were the only one in whose hands the spices sang back.” The *analepsis* inform that the heroine is the strongest student on the island, full of arrogance and life. The life on the island is full of magic and fantasy.

It is the old one who trained all the mistresses how to use spices, give names to all other mistresses but the protagonist has chosen her own new name and place. As she says to The Old One:

"But I had chosen already. First Mother, my name will be Tilo" Tilo short for Tilottama.....I will be Tilottama, the essence of Til, life giver, restorer of health and hope" (44)

The *analepsis* also illustrates the myth behind the name Tilottama. So, Tilottama, the mistress of spices, has many disguises and names that reveal her multiple identities. Chameleon like, she keeps changing throughout the novel, making clear how complex is the problem of identity crisis, that Indians try to cope up with in a foreign land. Accordingly, her name changes many times from Nayantara to Bhagyavati and now Tilottama:

"My Mistress name, finally and forever, after so many changes in who I am" (45).

The Old One shows them (the Mistresses) the places around the world filled with people in the need of the spice. Out of them, Tilo is adamant in choosing Oakland. After choosing the place of their work they have to pass through Shampati Fire. Shampati is a mythical bird who rose new from ash:

"We danced around it singing of Shampati, bird of myth and memory who dived into conflagration and rose new from ash...I watched my sister- Mistresses. One by one they walked into the fire and when they reached its centre they disappeared." (58-59)

Divakaruni, again, through Island of Spices, Shampati fire creates a world of magic and fantasy. Each chapter in the book is the story of a spice-Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, Kalojire, Neem, Red chilli, Makaradwaj, Lotus Root, Sesame. The spices are the integral part of the narrative. 'The spices rule' not only adding spice to dishes but have magical powers and are connected with the people they consume it. The narrative blends the spices with the characters and their emotions. Turmeric, the hope of rebirth; Chilli, the cleanser of evil; Fennel, to cool tempers; Fenugreek, to render the body sweet and Kalojire to reduce pain and suffering. The spices play an important role in the novel. They sing and speak about themselves, and even warn Tilo, like other characters in the novel. So, the spices are personified in the novel, at that level the spices act as narrator i.e *intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrators*. This can be illustrated through an example from the text:

When I hold it in my hands, the spices speak to me. Its voice is like evening, like the beginning of the world. Spices are personified:

I am turmeric who rose 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 nectar and before the poison and thus lie in between.”(13)

Divakaruni invokes features of Hindu mysticism throughout the narrative, metonymically linking the spices to Hindu beliefs in cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction. In effect, the spices take on destructive and constructive qualities depending on how they are wielded. The spices are used to unite lovers, mend a family rift that occurs when a young woman wants to marry outside of the South Asian community, aid a young Indian boy who is the subject of racist attacks at school, and encourage another young woman to leave her abusive husband. In her interview with Marcus, she answered regarding use of fantasy:

“A writer should push boundaries, and I wanted to try something new, take risks...all this risk taking ... involves bridging barriers, doing away with boundaries: not only boundaries between life and death, the everyday world and the mythic one, but with the thought that perhaps the boundaries we created in our lives are not real. I’m talking about the boundaries that separate communities and people.”

Tilottama, the rebellious immortal, reaches Oakland in the guise of an old woman, to operate the spice shop. The spice speaks to her and helps her in helping the troubled mortals she encounters. For the Western culture Spices seems to have no power. But in the Indian context Spices have the power, they are real and can create magic. So, Divakaruni makes use of Magical Realism. She employs the magical realist technique to comment on racism in multi-ethnic America. She endows magical properties to spices, an everyday, mundane commodity largely imported from India. The protagonist, Tilo, is the owner of a spice store in San Francisco who, over the course of the novel, reveals herself to be a healer performing magic through spices.

In the hands of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, spices and magic become forms of alternate realism. According to Faris, one of the important features of magical realist texts is that a familiar

incident or object is endowed with magic. Thus, associating a mundane commodity with magic makes it all the more fascinating. As we know, there is no distinction between magical and medicinal values of spices in the novel; both the ‘real’ and ‘magical’ attributes of the spices are depicted familiarly, with minute details. In the novel Tilo deploys clove and cardamom to help Jagjit in his friendless state:

“Crushed clove and cardamom, Jagjit, to make your breath fragrant. Cardamom which I will scatter tonight on the wind for you. North wind carrying them to open your teacher’s unseeing. And also sweet pungent clove, lavang, spice of compassion.”(39)

Thus, Divakaruni conflates the medicinal and everyday use of clove and cardamom with their magical capacity to evoke compassion. She almost seamlessly merges a familiar truth with an unfamiliar one. Divakaruni argues that the technique she uses in the novel is her own version of realism, as opposed to the established one. As the author comments in an interview,

“I've always been interested in alternate realities and believe that we live in a world where many realities are nestled one within the other.”

She has endowed the spices with the power to heal and harm, to please and to punish, to create and destroy and even reorganise the world order.

The novel is replete with fantasy and magic but there is strong undercurrent of realism. Tilottama’s and Immigrant’s narrative related to their experience in America is full of realistic elements. As the narrative progresses the fantasy element diminishes and the realistic element becomes prominent.

Now, begins the fifth phase of narration. It is the present moment of the narrative which narrates Tilottama’s experience as the Mistress of Spices. In *analepsis*, it is pointed out that as Mistress of Spices they have to follow rules—never leave the spice store; never touch other human being, to love only the spices, never to see their reflection. As long as they follow the rules the spices work: As Divakaruni herself comments:

“In Indian folk belief spices are used for more than flavourings. They have magical powers all their own and they provide remedies for physical maladies as well as cures for spiritual ills. You have to be careful how you use the spices, since their misuse can be dangerous. If you don,t follow their rules, the spices can destroy you. In the novel, I made the rules into laws from the divine realm, laws Tilo could not transgress without serious consequences.”

Though the story focuses on the life and experiences of the protagonist i.e Tillotama, we are introduced with the life of immigrants. So, when we look at, duration of narrative, the amount of information presented in the story, in accordance with number of pages, the book constitutes we say that *summary* and *ellipsis* are the narrative mode in which the past story of the protagonist and the stories of the immigrant characters are presented. The primary narrative i.e. journey of the protagonist as mistress of spices, her desires and thoughts are well presented through *descriptive pause* and *scenes*. The text presents the period of protagonist’s birth to childhood in a few paragraphs. Similarly, her years with pirates are also summed up in a few paragraphs. The protagonist’s life on the magical island of spices is presented through *summary* and *ellipsis*.

There is no description of time that how much time they spent on the island. So, the text presents the protagonist’s entire life from her childhood to become mistress of spices with other details in not more than thirty pages. The narrative makes use of diegetic mode of narration. When we look at the overall duration that is used in the text, the text discourse time is shorter than its story time.

The descriptive pause shapes the reader’s perception of the immigrants and the distant setting contributes to the portrayal of Tilo and other immigrants isolated from society. Through descriptive *pauses* and *scenes*, the narrative presents the difficulties and dilemma faced by Tilo and the immigrants. The most vivid among them are the faces of four whose fates are inextricably linked with that of Tilo: Geeta, Lalita, Haroun and Raven.

The descriptive *scene* and *iterative* narrative illustrate the man-woman relationship through the story of Lalita. This is presented through Tilo’s *focalisation* and *narratized* speech. There are several instances of racist attack enumerated through Tilo’s focalization when she reads the forbidden newspaper. Tilo helps all the immigrants with the spices. As long as Tilo follows the

canons of her mentors on the island, and uses the spices only to help her customers and never for her own enrichment, her powers work their magic. However, she begins to rebel and becomes involved in the lives of her clients. Whenever, Tilo is overpowered by worldly desire. The Old One and the spices intervene to remind and warn her mistress rules. This type of narration is, according to Genette, *repetitive* narration. Tilo is unable to resist herself from the temptations of the lonely American. She falls in love with this lonely American young man, Raven, which constitutes the sixth phase in the narrative.

Now Tilo has to choose between a supernatural, immortal life and the vicissitudes of an existence in modern time. Through *prolepsis*, she wants to tell Raven, who wants to escape from the problems of urban America:

“Raven forgive me, the note will say. I do not expect you to understand. Only to believe that I had no choice. I thank you for all you have given me I hope I have given you a little too. Our love would never have lasted for it was based on fantasy, yours and mine, of what it is to be Indian. To be American...There is no earthly paradise.”(311)

Tilo perfectly illustrates the dichotomy faced by many immigrants. How far do ones traditions and values affect how one can assimilate into a new life and how much of them show one give up to fit in? Tilo is a metaphor for the young Asian women caught between family and religion and living an independent life.

Tilo makes her decision and she again changes her name to Maya, the Hindu term that the everyday world of desire pain and joy as the world of illusion, a place of inevitable sorrow from which the Hindu is trying to escape. As Tilo says to Raven:

“Now you must help me find a new name. My Tilo’s life is over, and with it that way of calling myself...” One that spans my land and yours, India and America, for I belong to both now. Is there such a name?” Then says, “How about Maya?” She has finally broken free of all ties and asserts, “I who now have only myself to hold me up” (338)

In the end, she has crossed the threshold that opens up to a whole new world and she is now entirely responsible for her own self. Thus, in the novel, we find a complex woman confused over her position in the world and always seeking several ways to alter her existence because she is dissatisfied with what life has to offer. She consistently examines her own self and in confronting her own helplessness, isolation and desires, she undergoes a process of self-development. In maintaining her Indian entity as Maya and stepping out into America with Raven at the same time, she dissolves boundaries between the two worlds. The narrative ends on a positive note and Tilo, along with a majority of the characters depicted within the novel, achieve happiness in their painful search for greater individual freedom by moving beyond the limits of their enclosures. The characters of the novel are facing a tug of war because of the differences between Indian tradition and Western tradition. There is a clash between the old values and New values and is well presented through a *scene* where Geeta's grandfather, another immigrant, tells Tilo:

“May be obey for all these firing women in this country, but you tell me yourself didi, if a young girl should work late-late in the office with other men and came home only after dark and sometimes in their car too? Chee Chee, back in Jamshedpur they would have smeared dung on our faces for that. “But dada, this is America after all...”

“Arre baap, so what if this is America, we are still Bengalis, no?(88)

It is not only *pauses* and *scenes* which the novelist is using for narrative movement. There is use of *ellipsis* and summary also to increase the narrative speed of novel.

As far as frequency is concerned, *singulative* narrative, *repetitive* narrative and *Iterative* narrative are present thus contributing to the understanding of characters and their situations e.g. Repetitive narration is used to express Tilo's feeling, during childhood, when her fame spread:

“And so it was that I grew proud and wilful. I wore muslins so fine...I combed my hair with combs carved from the shells of great tortoises... And when I read in their eyes I felt disdain, and a bile black triumph that churned in my belly because I who had been last was now first”(9)

Repetitive narration combined with Singulative narration is used when spices speak of their powers and magic. The same style of narration is used in each chapter.

The Mistress of Spices provides the reader with *internal focalization* i.e. first person point of view. But the point of view goes beyond the limitations of first-person narration, as Tilo, the first-person narrator, can read the thoughts of the characters. The novel starts with the *internal focalization*, through Tilo, who uses *narratized speech*. She is the most important focal character in the novel. Owing to narrative strategies she can peep into the psyche of the character. *Internal focalization* and narratized speech are used in the novel. It is through her focalization that all other characters are presented. Tilo's narratized speech is interrupted with *transposed*, *imitated* speech and *immediate* speech.

Tilo is primary agent of external and internal focalising. It is through Tilo's *focalization* that the desires, woes of the immigrants are presented e.g Lalita's suffering is presented through the focalization of the narrator. There is amalgamation of direct tagged speech, direct untagged speech, indirect speech and immediate speech to present characters fully both physically and psychologically. They contain the strengths, weaknesses and quirks all human do. We see that a spectrum of continuous effect is being created by subtle modulations of the narrative register as the prose moves in and out of free direct speeches, free indirect speeches. Besides, the main narrative there are embedded stories where the main narrator i.e. Tilo functions as narratee and the character of the novel functions as narrator e.g. Raven is telling his own story. Here he acts as *intradiegetic homodiegetic* narrator. In an interview with Sarah, Chitra Divakaruni states about her narrative style:

“I had the novel in a multiple- narrator perspective, some who saw the story up close , but I had to add the omniscient narrative voice. I had used this voice sporadically, but it had been a big part of the narration. It’s like changing the lens on a camera.”

The novel clearly spells a message of hope and the ability to transcend limitations and hurdles that occur when two cultures confront each other. She also exerts the significance of finding one's own self. They can also be involved in the American culture while continuing to retain their ethnic identities. They can put high values on

family ties, while observing the Indian tradition and also keep in touch with their other Indian peers. At the same time, they can also be successful in carrying out their roles as Americans, thus, adopting the good values of both cultures.

Divakaruni has put into words what millions of immigrants would find hard to articulate, especially within the confines of the dilemmas that have been faced by women who move from the locales and traditions of home and into the brave new universe outside. She proves that a novel can be a window to a culture and that it offers an insightful passage into another world and another life. So, the narrative is a tale of Tilo, an immortal, in an old woman's body. She is a Mistress of Spices, and through the narrative, the reader is able to see the women she was and how she becomes mistress of spices. This history is interwoven with the "current" stories of Tilo's customers and Tilo's herself. In her interview with Sarah Anne Johns, Diivakaruni states about her narrative style:

“... The Mistress of Spices, I was trying to bring together very different kinds of things. I was trying to bring together the language of poetry and the language of prose. I was trying to bring together the myths of India and the harsh realities on inner city America. I was working with those very different genres, styles, almost different worlds that collide.”

Thus, the power of narrative of the novel lies in the uses myths, satire and irony to reveal the attitudes of society towards women and the immigrants. Divakaruni's writings are a scathing critique on the attitude of people towards immigrants and also of our Indian society and values that have always accorded only a secondary status to its women. In Divakaruni, we get women in a state of flux, undergoing mental conflicts and in the process, trying to establish a new identity as strong individuals. In her work is probing into women's mind we see her use of dream psychology. The device of fantasy is used to represent the writer's wish to cross boundaries of time and place.

Works Cited:

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee “Dissolving Boundaries.” *Bold type*. 1997.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *The Mistress Of Spices*. New York: Anchor, 1997.

Faris, Wendy B. " Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Post Modern Fiction" *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, 1995 ed. Lois Parkinson Zamora And Wendy B. Faris. Durham and London : Duke UP, 2005.

Genette, Gerard . *Narrative Discourse : An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, New York : Cornell U.P, 1980.

<http://www.waterbridgereview.org/092004/cnv_divakaruni_p1.php>

Jain, Jasbir. 'Gender and Narrative Strategy', *Between Spaces of Silence*, (ed). Kamini Dinesh . New Delhi: Sterling, 1994 .

Johnson, Sarah Anne " An Interview with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni" *Conversations With American Women Writers*. USA: University Press of New England. 2004.

Marcus Morton " An Interview with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: *The Spices Of Life*. Metroactive, 1997.

Water Bridge Review. Interview with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, September 2004.