

Shattered Silence: A Study of Trauma and Suppression of Women in the Novel *Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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Abstract

Mistress of Spices by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni written in the unique style of magical realism. The novel portrays the adventure of the protagonist. The character is a mysterious figure who runs a grocery store in the inner city of Oakland. The magic spices help the Indian immigrants in a foreign land. *Mistress of Spices* from Anita Devakaruni, endeavours to examine the sufferings of women in India. The novels revolve around the psychological conflicts of the women characters and its solution through spices. The women characters are the victims of society. The paper attempts to examine the representation of the women characters and their muted struggles. The novel revolves around various struggles of women in a dominated society. She expresses the muted melodies of the women and their desire for rejuvenation. Women characters in this novel are forced to accept the situation of life. The force of society reveals the condition of women in a cruel society. Freedom of women is always in a state of false surface. The study tries to encounter the struggle of women and their psychological inflections.

Keywords: Psychological, Conflict, Muted Melodies, Struggles Domination

Feminist writing has got a beautiful path in Indian writing in English. The contemporary writers have a place where they can write their perspectives about the male dominated society. Feminist writings centre around the psychological pain and sufferings of the women and pave the way to unveil the hidden emotions of the womenfolk. The novel revolves around the protagonist and her magical power of spices. The author employs the magical realism technique to unveil the emotional conflict of the women. The novel is the fusion of Magical realism where spices have the power to meet the customers' emotional needs. Tilo is the protagonist of the novel. She was born in India and owned a shop. The novel is a blend of magical realism and reality. It's also the fusion of Indian mysticism and immigrant

experience. The title itself reveals the magical realism touch of the writer.

The most important thing in this novel is that the protagonist is not allowed to leave the store, she is not supposed to touch another person, and she should love only the spices. The novel's central conflict revolves around her psychological struggle to follow these rules while treating the pains of the people she encounters in her spice shop. In America, Tilo meets many people with different psychological illness in their life. She tries to solve their difficulties with the help of spices. Her empathetic nature often puts her in trouble, especially as she cares more about the lives of her customers. The novel not only talks about the struggles of people. It also talks about the psychological inflections of the protagonist too.

The novel presents Tilo's traumatic experiences while tracing her path of change and self-discovery., it also removes the wails of the Indian women. The entire life of the Indian women tied in kitchen walls. The vessels and spices become their companions. Tilo is one of the representatives of Indian women. Tilo is tied inside the shop. In order to satisfy others' needs, she has to satisfy many of her luxuries.

Like Tilo, Indian women have to leave all their comfort to satisfy the needs of the family members. Lithia is the best example in this case. She married an old man for the sake of her parents. To satisfy the parents' needs, many of the Indian girls lost their entire lives and lost their happiness. Lalita gets married to Ohagi, an old man. She has cheated by showing the photo which was taken years back. She realized this on her wedding day and became helpless to stop the marriage. She is interested in her sewing but marries an old man for the sake of her parents. She agrees to marry to satisfy her parents. Indian parents abort their fetus when they come to know the child's gender.

For Indian women, each of these 'virtues' represents forms of oppression. This includes heavy household work, the objectification of their bodies and sexuality, and the expectation that they should accept abuse, violence, and exploitation as part of their lives. They are expected to fulfil their roles as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters; they are never seen as individuals with their own choices. The Manuscript (The Lawbook of Manu; 200 BCE–200 CE) is a widely referenced text among the Hindu right. It codifies oppression based on caste, class, and gender in Indian society. It clearly states that women should be controlled by their fathers in childhood, by their husbands in adulthood, and by their sons in old age. It asserts that women do not have an independent existence beyond these roles in connection to men. Such oppression is accepted across different communities, including non-Hindus, in India.

In modern India, a strong culture exists that justifies many restrictions on women's behaviour, appearance, movement, and social interactions. There is also widespread acceptance of various atrocities against them, including domestic violence, sexual

abuse, and rape. These are often viewed as consequences of women breaking these cultural.

The character assists the above mentioned struggles of women. Dhaksha works as a nurse at the hospital and also takes care of her old mother- in-law. She feels exhausted from her duelling work. It troubles her Physics as well as her emotions. Dhaksha doesn't learn the art of saying no to people. Tilo helps her by providing black pepper to boost her immunity, so they give her black pepper to boost her immunity so that she can learn the art of telling no to people. The spices help her to develop the ability to reciprocate the needs of other people.

Another character in this novel is Gotham, who is in love with Juan, who lives in Chicano. The family doesn't accept her love and gets upset. She leaves the house after quarrelling with her parents without informing them. Geetha's grandfather asks Tilo to convince Gotham. Tilo refuses because she can't leave her shop according to the vows of the mistress of spices. The issue reflects the typical Indian parent's mentality towards their children's affairs.

Raven talks about his mother, Celestina, who is not white, but pretends to be white as she thinks it gives her self-esteem and happiness. She hates her own community. Raven does not like his mother for this reason. He left her alone after he had started earning. He starts living his life without any aim. He earns and sends some money to his mother but will not even reply to her letters. And one day, when he goes in search of his mother, he gets to know that she is no more. He confides everything to Tilo as he thinks that his burden will be reduced.

The novel explores the state of Indian women and their relationship with spices. The protagonist has the power to cure the emotional sufferings of the people with the help of spices. Likewise, Indian women cook for the entire family and take care of family members. The protagonist, in order to use the power, she has, to remain inside the store, like the Indian woman in order to fulfil her family wishes. She has to satisfy her own desires and is stuck inside the wall of the kitchen.

The magic power of spices is the symbolic representation of the psychological state of women. It symbolizes women's long connection with the kitchen and the spices. In this case, the mental well-being of

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the women became questionable, and they became the victims. The spices have the power to cure the mental state of the people who visit the shop with various emotional issues. The researcher compares this state with Indian women. The food which was cooked by the women gives health and happiness to the entire family, but the family becomes unconscious about the health of the person who prepared the food.

Another character Hameeda was given talaq by her husband who does not have children. She lives with her neighbour Haroun. Tilo gives lotus root to Hauron to attain love in his life. She wants Hauron to have a beautiful life with Hameeda. Tilo visited America with the help of her magical spices and became the mistress of spices. She cures mental illness with the help of the spices. The problems of women are always associated with the domination of men and society.

Divakaruni uses spices into a language of emotion in the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. The spices are the representations of memory, healing, resiliency, and the emotional burden of the diaspora. In this novel spices act as physical and emotional remedies.

The study examines the psychological conflict of human beings. Several articles structure Tilo's story around identity crisis, self-discovery, and the conflict between responsibility and desire. Tilo's spice business becomes a site where immigrants' loneliness, racial prejudice, generational friction, and cultural conflict appear. Indian spices externalize grief, but they also provide comfort, continuity, and a means of seeing survival within relocation, thus the relationship between them and human suffering is not cosmetic.

The novel depicts the domination of society and sufferings of women. The connection between the struggle of women and their relationship with the spices reveals the continuous struggle of women and their long connection in the kitchen. In this novel the writer uses the tool of magical realism to express the struggle of women characters. The magic connection of spices beautifully portrays the women's sufferings inside the kitchen walls. It's a long term trauma for the women community. If the kitchen gives the magic power every woman will fly from there. The novel is a beautiful depiction of the hidden pain of the women folk.