

MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S BEFORE WE VISIT THE GODDESS

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Abstract:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a prolific writer who has written many novels, short stories and poems. She has published many works, among them *Before We Visit the Goddess* is one of her finest works. The novel also deals with the diasporic issues of immigrant women. Divakaruni's works are based on women and the problems they face in life. Her works also deal with the lives of Indian immigrants. The novel is about three generational women Sabitri, Bela and Tara. The whole novel revolves around the life of grandmother, mother and daughter. Here the relationship between Bela and Tara is chosen for this study. Divakaruni depicts the life and loneliness of immigrant women and their failure and success throughout the novel.

Key Words: Mother-Daughter relationship, immigrant women, three generation.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a well-known writer among many Indian women novelists. She deals with the sufferings of immigrants in her works. She has published many works, among them *Before We Visit the Goddess* is one of her finest works. Divakaruni's works are based on women and their problems in life. Her works also deal with the lives of Indian immigrants. Her writings break the old stereotype. The present paper attempts to study the theme of mother-daughter relationship in *Before We Visit the Goddess*.

The novel is about the three generational women Sabitri, Bela and Tara. The whole novel revolves around the life of grandmother, mother and daughter. The novel begins with the letter of Bela, asking her mother to advise her daughter Tara who decides to drop out of college. Bela is a girl who disobeys her mother's words and drops out of her college years ago. She has eloped with Sanjay to America. When she falls in love with Sanjay, Sabitri is against her wish. It is not that she does not want her daughter to marry him but her only wish is to make Bela continue her education. Sabitri's desire is to educate Bela and stand on her own feet without depending on any man.

In fact, Sabitri is also responsible for her daughter's irresponsible character. She falls in love with a wrong man but class issues interfere her completion of education. But the truth is never revealed to Bela until Sabitri writes about her life to Tara, whom she never meets. Here the reader can find the zigzag relationship of three women characters. Sabitri hides her sad and painful life of her own to Bela and raises up her as a single woman. But Bela

without understanding anything leaves her mother alone and flies to America with Sanjay. Here the mother and daughter are separated due to the lack of communication, love and loss.

Bela on the other hand, longs for her mother's care and love during her pregnancy period. Divakaruni has clearly pictured the bond between mother and daughter through the character Bela and Sabitri. Though she is away from her mother Bela is connected through love and memories. The loss and love always connects the people wherever they are. Likewise the bond between Sabitri and Bela travels across the ocean through letters and telephone. Bela understands her mother's words after her arrival to the host land America. Divakaruni's narrating style makes the novel more interesting. In each and every chapter she gives a twist to her readers, in that case the reader can find the unexpected twist in the life of Bela in America. There she struggles to manage with Sanjay. Sabitri's doubt becomes real. Not only Bela depends on Sanjay but both of them depend upon his friend Bishu who comments criminal activities cater to their needs. Bela is trapped and due to pregnancy she has no choice but to depend on her husband and his friend.

During her pregnancy time Bela badly needs her mother's care but due to some inconvenience and strict order of Sanjay she avoids visiting India. A pregnant woman needs great care during her delivery time. Here both mother and daughter failed to share their emotions and feelings. If they had experienced their emotions, Bela would not have elope with Sanjay and suffered an unhappy life in America. She thinks that her mother does not realize her thoughts. Tara is like her mother in her feelings.

The novel focuses on three women Sabitri, Bela and Tara that is grandmother, mother and daughter. First character Sabitri, breaks the family tradition and norm by marrying a man without her mother's consent. Secondly Bela ran away from her house by disobeying Sabitri and lived a painful life, and the third one is Tara who also does the same thing by having a false thought that her mother is also against her desires. Though Bela avoids visiting India and her mother she needs her support in some way. That is why she writes letter to her mother and seeks help to advise Tara. Through her powerful writings Divakaruni exposes the relationship between grand-mother and grand-daughter in this novel.

Tara, an American born girl does not know the values and traditions of Indian culture. Bela as a mother fails to educate her about the Indian tradition and culture to Tara. So a reader can find the broken relationship of mother and daughter in these two characters Bela and Tara. Due to lack of communication and improper relationship with her mother Tara leave her parents and lives an independent life. Infact Tara realizes her mistakes after her meeting with Dr. Venkatachalapathi, an Indian man who visits America. Tara collects many information and learns good qualities from Dr. Venkatachalapathi during her travel with him. Following this, Tara leaves the house to live an independent life. She works as a taxi driver that time she gets the chance to meet him. After her meeting with Dr. Venkatachalapathi, Tara's life has changed, she joins her college again and graduated.

Tara on the other hand never had a good relationship with her mother and father. She has isolated herself from her parents to live a happy life. But it ends up in vain by her unfaithful boyfriend Robert. She leaves her home for the love she has for Robert and believes that he is not like her father who has cheated her mother Bela. But soon she comes to realize the fake face of Robert who cheats Tara. Here one can find that all the three women had an unhealthy relationship with men in their lives.

Divakaruni gives freedom to her characters to run away from home. But they cannot succeed in their marital life. Divakaruni shows that by making her women characters look back their old days, relations, etc. When coming to the novel, Tara and Bela seem to be independent but it leads to adverse consequences. Their life seems to be sad and unhappy after their marriage.

Through this novel Divakaruni tries to bring out the fact that no women can lead a peaceful life without the support of father or mother. It becomes true in the story of Bela and Tara. They both never tried to understand their own mothers and so they faced many ups and downs in their life. Finally all the women characters realize their inner self and reconcile with their mothers. But Bela does not get such opportunity, Sabitri has died of heart attack while Bela and Sanjay decide to separate from their marital life. She comes to know her mother's death too late.

Bela and Tara do not have a good relationship and it ends in vain. Sabitri who has only a few photographs of Tara tried to connect with her through letter. Sabitri concedes to write a letter to her unknown granddaughter being compelled by a Bela, as a sense of duty, love and concern. Her communication through letter is completed only after Tara comes across the letter accidentally years later as she is rummaging through her things in her mother's house. By this time Tara has moved on in her life, but still the letter offers her the key to meaningful existence. This shows the bonding between grandmother and granddaughter relationship. Though they are not seen yet their communication and connection continue.

Though the mother and daughter are away from each other, they are connected through thoughts and nostalgia. Tara, after leaving the house stays with her friend and a turning point in her life comes after meeting Dr. Venkatachalapathi. Tara decides to move on and she succeeds in her life too without any support from her mother and father. Time has changed the mind of Tara and finally she reconciles with Bela. She even stays with her for a week to take care of her health. Thus Divakaruni ends the novel with a positive note.

Divakaruni as a diasporic writer, beautifully portrays the love and longing between a mother and daughter, and a grandmother and granddaughter. Thus the study achieves a positive goal by narrating the life and experience of Bela, Sabitri and Tara.

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