



Diasporic Identity And The Dual Burden Of Tradition And Modernity In The Mistress Of Spices

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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary of The Mistress of Spices

"The Mistress of Spices" is one of the renowned stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The story revolves around a character named Tilo. It is a titular character which shown as a shopkeeper born in India. She has some magic that helps her customer to satisfy their needs and desires with the mystical properties of spices. The story revolves around the situation when she falls in love with an American man named Raven (Alam 97-106). The story includes the strong implementation of Native American culture with a touch of magic. The story includes the concept that the protagonist has to go through. it also includes the importance of original identity in different situations. In the end, it is seen that Tilo goes back to our store and starts to do her business which indicates in the sign of eternal servitude to the mystical spices.

1.2 Introduce the concepts of diaspora, tradition, and modernity.

'Diaspora' is one of the Greek terms that identifies a group of people living in a specific location with different traditions, customs, and cultural heritage after migrating from their homeland. Diaspora is described as a group of migrants who maintain their ethnic traditions and sense of collectiveness while living in a new place (Li et al. 2109-2126). Tradition indicates the belief system which influences an individual to continue the structure of life from the past to the present. Diaspora, tradition, and modernity have been significantly connected through the demonstration of people traveling from that native community for different growth opportunities. For example, the migration of colored people in Britain is one of the major parts of diaspora and modernity intersecting.

1.3 State the purpose: Analyze the tension between maintaining cultural roots and adapting to modern American life through Tilo's story.

The difference between American culture and traditional Indian culture can change among the conflict between preserving The Identity and embracing the change according to the modern aspects. American culture is significantly influenced by an optimistic approach and transition between different characteristics and personalities. On the other hand, countries with rich cultures can face significant challenges in maintaining their cultural roots in that new country (Pye 81-98). This concept has been shown in the characteristics adaptation of Tilo while visiting America for the first time. Changes in the cultural roots of modern American lifestyle significantly affected the overall characteristics of the changes are approach towards world thinking.

2. Diasporic Identity: Balancing Cultural Roots and New Identities

2.1 Defining Diaspora and Its Application to the Indian Immigrant Community

Greek is derived from the word "diaspora," meaning "to scatter." It shows the worldwide human migration from one place to another. Migration people have strong emotional, cultural, and spiritual links to their native countries even if they are no longer physically there (Gowricharn 2020). The word "diaspora" sums up the togetherness and alienation that Indian immigrants experience. The goals of the adopting nation and attempts at cultural preservation are incompatible. Written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *The Mistress of Spices* exposes these phenomena. The book looks at the American experiences of Indian expats. Above overcoming challenges like racism, generational conflict, and cultural acceptability, preserving their customs, family ties, and spiritual interests takes first importance.

This book focuses on those in the Indian diaspora who are "in a liminal state" from a lack of links to their native country or American society. Divakaruni looks at this via Tilo's connections with non-governmental groups. Eventually, her spice company turns into a haven for concentration camp survivors so they can heal from their



trauma (Goswami 8-15). Based on the heroes' experiences, the book shows the difficulties Indian immigrants have trying to balance their acceptance of Western civilisation with their devotion to their background.

2.2 Tilo's Struggle to Maintain Indian Cultural Traditions

They follow Tilo's path as she battles for her right to keep her Indian background while living in America. Since Tilo's mission is to educate the Indian people about the advantages of traditional spices in healing emotional, mental, and physical conditions, she is the spice mistress. Her artwork helps her to have a close connection to her ancestors. With all their mystery and intricacy, spices are firmly ingrained in Indian customs and rituals (Ansar 135-141). These things represent the intellect of the nation. Not happy to only plan events, her company also acts as a link between the US and India. This town has been able to retain its historical legacy in front of contemporary living demands.

Tilo has to follow certain guidelines as he is in charge of preserving customs. Her seasons prevent her from changing her look, experiencing ephemeral joys, or engaging in social events. She not only cannot participate in any of them but also These characteristics would help to properly depict the social conventions connected with diasporic identity. Tilo has had to hide her identity to suit her society as she feels driven to help others (Mary 401). Her firm's ethnic background would still show even if she were experimenting with fresh concepts. Tilo has to go outside her comfort zone if she is to understand the complexity of her circumstances. As she comes to know herself, she starts to doubt the rules society sets and follow her aspirations for freedom, love, and self-expression. Striking a balance between honoring their background and actively participating in American culture in the present is the toughest obstacle for Indian immigrants to the US. This disparity exposes this problem. Tilo represents the conundrum the diaspora faces in trying to balance his search for justice with his need for autonomy.

2.3 Tilo's Dual Role: The Mistress of Spices and an Individual Adapting to a Foreign Society

Tilo's double position as a spice mistress and an immigrant adapting to American society greatly shapes the way the book examines identity. She returns to Indian culture by helping people settle into their new country and by serving them tasty, healthy cuisine (Kanwal 493). Her subjects highlighted the hardships families and people driven from their nation experienced as well as those of characters like Jagjit, Lalita, and Geeta.

Jagjit's Story: Jagjit, our hero, School bullies target and ridicule young Sikh lad Jagjit because of his beliefs and the religious head covering he wears. Issues with his parents' children have surfaced, the same as they have with other immigrants. Immigrant children have difficulties as their parents' cultural values do not usually coincide with American culture. Tilo gives Jagjit spices that are vital for his strength and endurance (enrouteindianhistory.com, 2024). Through telling Jagjit's story, Tilo fulfills her duty as guardian of old knowledge. She ensures that every generation understands the foundations of their family background so that she may accomplish this.

Lalita's Story: Based only on their gender, prejudice against Lalita and other women exists throughout the globe. Her violent marriage is an example of how out-of-date customs could impede the goals of modern diasporic countries equality and freedom. Should Tilo place Lalita in a situation where she may select her destiny, this custom should be strengthened. Tilo has to face the expenses of narrating Lalita's story whatever the circumstance. Her mistress of seasons starts to wonder whether the work is worth it.

person of Native American ancestry Raven supports Tilo in his inner development; Raven stands for modern American ideas of freedom and autonomy. Because of her love of Tilo, Raven feels free from social restrictions and finds her own. Tilo's obsession with Raven makes it quite evident that she wishes to reject society's expectations (Kanwal 493). But this relationship forces her to think about the repercussions of ignoring her responsibility as custodian of custom.

Tilo's changing sense of self exposes the intricacy of diasporic existence. She is resolved to be independent, treasure her new house, and honour the customs of her family of Indian immigrants. She cares much about society so she is very dedicated to promoting personal freedom (Bharathi 16-23). From this vantage point, the main issues diasporic people face every day are technology and tradition, belonging and the sensation of not belonging.

2.4 Tilo's Transformation and the Diasporic Experience

Banerjee, Chitra Divakaruni examines the nuances of diasporic identity in The Mistress of Spices from Tilo's point of view. Efforts to protect Indian customs in the US show Tilo's awareness of the more general difficulties experienced by Indian immigrants (Beg 229-234). She has to adjust to the contemporary world and all its possibilities and freedoms for reasons of her personal life; nonetheless, her job as a seasonal master keeps her close to her own country.



3. The Weight of Indian Tradition

Indian Traditions Tilo Tries to Preserve

According to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*, immigrants' Indian background is good and bad. Tilo, the spice mistress, must preserve Indian tradition in an uncomfortable atmosphere. The book examines how language, traditions, and tastes preserve Indian culture. One of Tilo's obligations is to preserve traditions. Her spice business brings comfort and fellowship to displaced people.

Language

Society relies on spoken language, and Tilo protects it. She often speaks her native language, which is rich in geographically distinct vocabulary and phrases that show Indian linguistic variety. Many immigrant characters in the narrative depend on this language bond. Language lets people connect with their ancestors by passing along tales, facts, and experiences (Saranyadevi 60). Tilo teaches Hindi to her customers to express her fight to keep her ethnicity despite societal pressure to integrate.

Rituals and customs

Tilo people celebrate important holidays. According to the book, Indian traditional customs may comfort alienated immigrants. Rituals include summoning spirits and carefully seasoning (Kaliche 22). Tilo continues to honour and give the gods since these rituals are based on Indian customs. Despite feeling alone, rituals may help individuals connect to their history and their beliefs.

Spices as symbols of Indian heritage

Seasons affect the storyline because of their Indian ancestry. The link between Tilo and spices illustrates Indian culture and spirituality. The medicinal and symbolic characteristics of each spice may help newcomers feel at home (Saranyadevi 60). These include fenugreek, which symbolises vigour and growth, and turmeric, which symbolises health and security. Tilo helps her clients since she understands these components. Generations have passed along such information. Divakaruni shows how spices may protect an individual's identity and feeling of belonging.

How Traditions Connect the Immigrant Community to Their Homeland

Indian exiles in *The Mistress of Spices* traditions may tie her to India. Relocating persons often keep their language, rituals, and habits to feel at home. Tilo's Spice Shop's traditional traditions and historical education comfort many consumers.

Indian culture reveres spices, which feature in this story. Jagjit emphasises the value of family history in building independence and resilience (Devi 231-235). Tilo manufactures self-esteem-boosting condiments using generations-old knowledge. Indian traditions have many challenges, but Lalita's narrative shows how they help people find themselves by bringing them back to their roots and values.

Adopting local norms may help newcomers feel more at home. Shared rituals and habits may help distant people connect (Chakraborty 16). Individuals and communities celebrate holidays, respect, and spice use. They adapt better to their new surroundings and build cultural ties. Through Tilo's exchanges, Divakaruni shows how rituals are a communal memory for immigrants.

Psychological and Emotional Challenges of Clinging to Traditions in a Foreign Environment

Conforming to a new culture may be difficult, despite its potential advantages to mental health. Tilo and the other migrants struggled to balance Indian customs with American norms. Many immigrants struggle to keep their culture while adjusting to a new country. This conflict may cause tiredness, uncertainty, and alienation.

Tilo's story revolves here. Being mistress of seasons prevents her from being herself or pursuing her interests (Bera 30-2). People hate her because she sacrifices her freedom to maintain her hometown's customs. Many immigrants have been encouraged to hide parts of their identity to blend in, which causes internal struggle.

Conforming to conventions causes psychological concerns like the age difference between immigrant families (ijip.in, 2024). In the Geeta story, modernisation and tradition clash. She defies traditional wisdom in relationship assessments, therefore her family struggles to embrace her independence. This generational conflict shows how tradition may cause family discord.

Immigrants may feel confused and guilty upholding long-standing norms. Most of the novel's key characters struggle to reconcile their background with American society. Due to internal turmoil, people feel alone and dislocated in their adopted and original countries.

4. The Pressures of Modern American Life

4.1 Explore the pressures immigrants face in America

Immigrants who live in America often face different pressures during the time of assimilation. The immigrants might find it difficult to learn the language of English and look for jobs, and the immigrants might find it difficult



to understand American culture. Some immigrants who live in America might feel isolated, and they miss their home countries as well as their families (Solheim 2022). The immigrants might face discrimination in the country and sometimes the immigrants feel judged for being different from the locals. Many immigrants also feel worried about their legal status as the immigrants feel worried about whether they will be accepted in the country or not. Despite all the problems the immigrants try to work hard to make their life better so that they immigrants can secure their futures for themselves and their families. Immigrants who live in America face several problems such as identity crises the immigrants feel confused between their home culture and the fresh American way of life. The immigrants on the one hand want to keep their traditions, language, and values but on the other hand, the immigrants want to adjust to the American way of style (Maleku 365-382). This creates confusion among immigrants at times when they are being forced to change who they are. Immigrants might feel like they do not fully belong to both places. Over the period, the immigrants try to look for balance making a unique identity that blends both their old and fresh cultures. Immigrants who live in America often feel pressured to meet societal expectations such as the immigrants might expect to learn English quickly, get a good job, and succeed in that fresh country. At the same time, the immigrants will face pressure to keep their own culture alive among themselves. All these demands will be very stressful as the immigrants might find it difficult to balance fitting in and staying true to themselves.

4.2 Discuss how Tilo and the community struggle to adapt to modern life while maintaining their Indian roots.

Tilo and her community have struggled a lot to adapt to modern life as Tilo and her community try to keep their Indian roots. Tilo live in a fresh place along with various that consists of various customs, technology and ways of thinking, that might sometimes clash with their traditional values (Rahman 2024). Tilo is the same as everyone, Tilo and her community feel caught between the two worlds that is her Indian heritage and the way of living in the modern American lifestyle. In their efforts to fit in, Tilo and her community members always tried to learn fresh ways of living, such as speaking in the English language, using new technology, and understanding the American culture. Tilo also wants to stay connected with their Indian traditions such as the Indian language, food, and Indian festivals. To balance both cultures is very difficult as modern life can sometimes feel like it is pulling Tilo and her community away from their Indian culture. Tilo feels torn between pleasing her family and community, as everyone expects Tilo to stay true to their Indian culture. They also have the desire to make a life in the country of America where things are very different from the Indian culture. The Community might find it difficult too, as the community tries to maintain their cultural identity and the community might have the pressure to be successful in the new country. In the end, it can be said that Tilo and her community must find a way to adapt and mix their Indian culture and traditions with the demands of modern American life.

4.3 Highlight cultural conflict and modern desires

The immigrants in America experiences are developed by a tough interaction of modern desires, cultural traditions, and challenges or conflicts of navigating to a new place. Cultural conflicts are the common problems faced by immigrants in America. The immigrants find it difficult to adopt different traditional values and modern norms. Indian immigrants found it difficult to communicate with the Americans as they were unable to understand their language (Kruzykowski 2021). The Americans were also unable to understand the language of the Indian immigrants and thus were deprived of several things. The major cultural conflicts the Indian immigrants faced were respect for elders and relationships with each other. They generally struggled to match with the American more liberal culture and traditions. The Indian immigrants also faced challenges in America like confirming their traditional values. They were treated unequally by the Americans and were deprived of job opportunities and relationships. They were judged based on class, caste, race, and gender. Cultural conflicts were seen based on the modern desires of the younger Indian immigrants as they preferred to choose their life partner by themselves (Alexander et al. 1-14). The younger immigrants were interested in love marriages compared to that of traditional arranged marriages. This was opposite to that of the Indian tradition and culture. Due to traditional obligations and family expectations, several individuals were denied their independence and autonomy. The younger Indian immigrants wanted independence in their both personal and professional life and this was obstructed by the family expectations and traditional obligations. Due to traditional cultural values conflicts were seen between the Indian immigrants as they struggled to express themselves and find their place in American society. Thus questions were raised regarding their existence and cultural identity.

5. Self and Belonging: Navigating Dual Identities

5.1 Analyse how the duality of tradition and modernity shapes Tilo's sense of self and belonging.

Due to the traditional Indian culture, they were unable to express themselves to American society and thus faced criticism. The language barrier was the primary challenge as the Indian migrants were unable to communicate with the locals of American society (Obinna 2023). They found it difficult to ask for basic daily



needs, food, shelter, and develop social connections. Like for example, Tilo a brown-skinned Indian woman faced the problem of racism and complexity regarding her ethical and racial identity. Trying to adapt to the culture and traditions of America, the Indian immigrants and Tilo felt disconnected and experienced dislocation from their Indian culture.

5.2 Connect her experiences to a broader immigrant narrative.

People belonging to a significant group derive a sense of identity and belonging. These people belonging to diverse or different cultural backgrounds will encounter dual identities. They will navigate between the dominant culture of the host society or country and their cultural heritage. Thus the Indian immigrants had a feeling of self and belonging (Ullah 1-16). They experienced dual identity as they navigated between the dominant culture of American society and their Indian cultural heritage. Individuals having dual identities experience the problem of allegiances, conflict of loyalty, and a sense of belonging. The Indian immigrants faced the challenge of conflict of loyalty as they were unable to completely adopt the American culture.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summarize the key points.

In conclusion, The Mistress of Spices significantly please show the dual tone of often individual characters following both cultural roots and modern lifestyles. Adopting Native American ancestry can be significantly beneficial for people in India due to the cultural heritage and modern lifestyle.

6.2 Reflect on the dual burden faced by immigrants as depicted in the novel.

In the story, the lifestyle of Raven indicates freedom with modernism on the other hand Tilo's obsession towards his character is significantly shown by the social expectation. The weight of Indian tradition is significantly high which has been shown throughout the characteristics changes in the protagonist. Both ethnicity and societal pressure dignified her expression and spirit.

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