

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Diasporic Context

Originating from the Greek word for ‘scattering’, the term refers to the dispersion of Jewish people from their homeland. At times used synonymously with terms such as ‘exile’, expatriation’ and ‘alienation’, this term has come to occupy a significant position in recent years in the field of post colonial writing. In the words of Judith Shuval, many elements come together to form the reality that is diaspora. He reflects from a wider perspective on the word diaspora as “... social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality.” (43).

Steve Vertovec in his seminal text related to diasporic cultural setting titled *Transnationalism*, categorizes the different meanings of diaspora and explores the term from various perspectives and theoretical frameworks. From looking at diaspora as a ‘social form’, a ‘type of consciousness’, a ‘a mode of cultural production’ to looking at it as a ‘problem’ or threat, this text widens the definition of the term and offers an interesting insight into the diasporic population which resides

outside certain ‘territories’ and who cross the borders of nation-states, thereby becoming ‘transnational’ communities or citizens.

Robin Cohen in his engaging and enlightening work *Mobilizing diasporas in a Global Age*, explores various ways of understanding migration, and further classifies diaspora studies into four phases and also talks about different types of diasporas. Categorizing diasporas as Classical, Imperial and Victim types to diasporas for trade and commercial reasons, Cohen traces the migratory movement of social identity construction as he offers insights into the diasporic conditions of Jews, Armenians, Chinese, Lebanese, Africans, Indians, and Caribbean population. He opines that there are nine common features of diasporic community and seeks to explore the ever-changing relationships between the country of origin and the adopted country.

Homi Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*, explores the idea of identity as being a dynamic, ever transforming phenomenon as opposed to being a fixed, stable one. Introducing terms such as ‘liminality’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘interstitial space’ into the post colonial discourse, Bhabha emphasizes the need to do away with binary oppositions such as the first world and third world nations, colonizer and colonized, central and marginalized, so on and so forth. It is in fact in the thresholds or Faultline areas, which is where the negotiations and overlap of these binaries occur which should be the prime focus, as it is in these interceding spaces where lies the possibility of the constructions of nations and cultures. Referring to various theoretical and literary

perspectives, the author espouses the concept of ‘in-between spaces and ‘hybridity’ especially with respect to the diasporic positionality and compels the readers to reimagine the phenomenon of national and cultural identity.

Diasporic Writing

The common themes that have been explored by diverse diasporic writers are rootlessness, quest for identity, nostalgia and yearning for the homeland as well as cultural and generational clashes between the first- and second-generation migrant communities. This writing also becomes a mirror for reflecting the typical traditions, rituals, rites, customs, and rich cultural heritage of the respective country to which the writer belongs.

As the new settlers begin to start life afresh away from their mother country, in their chosen country, the pull of the native land is as strong as can be and their identification with the traditions, values, gender roles, norms and socio-cultural rituals prescribed by their home country is quite rigid and unshakable. In a live interview given to FICC FLO, Lucknow, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni when asked to share how she started the process of writing, confesses that she was quite devastated when she couldn’t visit India on the demise of her beloved grandfather and so, “to honour him”, she started writing. So, her first piece of writing was a poem that she wrote for him. Continuing further, she states, “a combination of family and missing family and personal events and also the larger events around me made me want to write.”

During the interview, she describes how she could relate to the homesickness experienced by the newly arrived settlers as she had undergone the same during her early days in the US. She also dwells upon the identity crisis that they grapple with and narrates that she wanted to throw light upon all these aspects through her writing, "... the plight of the immigrant who is cut off from their culture, who does not necessarily have a community around them and who is struggling to re-establish an identity for themselves. So, all these things made me want to write."

From beliefs and practices regarding family and kinship organization and moral, ethical norms to culinary and linguistic choices/arena, each aspect is primarily influenced by the authentic age-old ideas that these settlers have carried with them from their departed land. Those ideas that are close to the heart of this community becomes the guiding compass which inevitably and subtly imparts a sense of direction to their uprooted lives. Femke Stock in the essay *Home and Memory* comments that memory, "cannot be seen as direct, if partial, knowledge of past experiences. According to him the "act of remembering is always contextual, a continuous process of recalling, interpreting, and reconstructing the past in terms of the present and in the light of an anticipated future. [Stock 24]

Displacement, memory, and trauma

Displacement and translocation that is an inherent aspect of any diasporic experience at times positively contributes to the enrichment

of the society. In the words of Ananya J Kabir in “for the creative individual, both the moment of departure and the moment of arrival have immense emotional significance and commemorative potential as nodes when histories of individuals and families intersect with larger historical processes. (Knott 146)

Purabi Panwar in *Between Two Cultures*, observes “If we attempt to theorise diaspora, never mind which time frame it belonged to, we need to be conscious of the ways in which mourning, and grief acquire historical depth along with blurred racial memory.” Elaborating further on the role that memory plays in the lives of the diasporic subjects, Vijay Mishra opines: ‘Without memory, without a sense of loss, without a certain will to mythologise, life for many displaced persons will have become intolerable and diaspora theory would lose its ethical edge’ (Mishra 44). The diasporic sensibility is valuable to bridge culture through a widening of experience. Experience might be widened but bridging cultures, especially for one who has been away from the mother country and usually not in touch with it, is almost impossible. In the process of diasporan experiences a sense of loss and unhappiness especially when he or she has no ways or means to keep in touch with the country of origin is inevitable. (Panwar 69).

In the much-acclaimed novel *Shame*, Salman Rushdie opines about the experience felt by the uprooted, displaced migrant community who arrive in the alien host country with their “... invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard variety containing a few meaning-

drained mementoes” and he further states that these migrants have “come unstuck from more than land” as they have “floated upwards from history, from memory, from time. (86-87).

Displacement and dislocation from the country of origin is bound to be connected to trauma -of one kind or the other. The word trauma has a Greek origin and is defined as a wound originally referred to an injury inflicted upon the body (Merriam Webster dictionary). Of course, later the word came to be associated with wounds inflicted not only upon the mind but upon the mind also and has in the recent years been commonly used in medical literature as well. In the introduction of her seminal work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth gives a Freudian reference to the word trauma as she defines it as a wound located in the deeper layers of the unconscious mind. In other words, the wound is concealed and hence cannot be completely understood or processed by the conscious mind. Gleaning from Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Caruth explains the phenomenon of trauma as “... trauma is not locatable I the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later. (Caruth 4).” Therefore, it is extremely important that the extent of damage be gauged adequately, and that the trauma is healed and resolved. From the perspective of diasporic community, the sooner they start accepting the inevitable trauma that is a part and parcel of any diasporic journey and start taking measures and adopting strategies to heal and recover

and make their peace with the new hostile cultural set up, the sooner they will be able to ‘move on’ with their lives – in the physical and psychological sense of the word.

Culinary Space

American culinary historian and award-winning soul food writer Adrian Miller’s in his bestselling book “*Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time*” elaborates on the allure of African heritage food as well as the intersection of faith and food. He wants to bust certain myths and stereotypes woven around the traditional African cuisine such as it is the white masters’ leftovers for the black slaves mainly consisting of fried and sugary dishes. He repudiates these facts with his research and states that instead of looking at soul food as connected to the bitter past of slavery, it should be viewed as something celebratory. He further insists that it consists of ample portion of vegetarian fare as well. In his interview to William Porter from the Denver Post, he comments on the connection established with one’s tradition when one cooks or consumes their traditional heritage food, “There’s something about coming together over a plate of food that has a history that connects you to your ancestors and also connects you to people at the table in the present.” (Porter). Thus, it can be seen that this deep-rooted connection with one’s ancient past and shared history is undeniably a source of solace and strength that that the ‘starved’ new settlers need in the displaced land.

Commenting on how women become in a way culinary ambassadors in the new country and how that helps them act proactively to help others navigate their migratory journey, Deidre D. Matthee discusses the empowering function of the kitchen space: “Acts of making food, performed in the spaces of kitchens, reveal a sense of owning and embodying knowledge attained through hands-on experience” (438). Divakaruni herself has admitted to her readers her love for writing about food in her novels. The close connection between food and memory has been explored by Professor Susan Whitborne, who explains in one of her interviews the reason behind the powerful impact of food memories and relates it to all the five senses being involved in the creation of these memories. Judith Newton, Professor Emerita in Women and Gender Studies at U.C. Davis, in her memoir *Tasting Home: Coming of Age in the Kitchen*, which is an engaging work about the connection between the culinary space and home space. Anecdotes from her own life are interspersed with her cooking practices, recipes, she drives home the subtle meanings woven into food space, the comfort and solace it provides. As she accepts in her oft-quoted line from her memoir, “Awkwardness and shame. Still, I turned to food.” Many critics have commented on how food consumption can be used as a tool in the social, cultural, political sphere. Arjun Appadurai, comments on the same, “Food can be used to mark and create relations of equality, intimacy, or solidarity or, instead, to uphold relations, signalling rank, distance, or segmentation. This can be illustrated by looking at the use of food to communicate different types of class

through consumption.” Mohamed Bernoussi in his much-acclaimed work *Semiosis of intercultural cooking: The nineteenth century travel literature as a case study*, highlights the semiotic undercurrents connected to ‘others’ and migrants as studied in the chosen narratives. In the recent years, food culture has also started to be designated as intangible cultural heritage. In the work titled, *Cultural Heritage in Food Activism: Local and Global Tensions*, the author Carole Counihan explores the extent to which culinary cultural heritage is connected to food activism in the city of Cagliari. She elaborates on how Cultural heritage expressed as food has been defined by the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) “Cultural heritage in food includes the material: landrace plants, traditional dishes, tools, landscapes, and so on; as well as the immaterial: cuisine, intellectual and corporeal knowledge, traditions and techniques, ideology, sensory awareness, philosophies of food and health, and so on.

As women are inescapably bound to the culinary space, feminists have explored this subject from a variety of perspectives. For instance, *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies* edited by Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber (2005), Sidney W. Mintz’s *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, Barbara Haber’s *From Hardtack to Home Fries* (2002) and Laura Shapiro’s *Something from the Oven* (2004). Also, in recent times there has been a surge in literary anthologies that focus on the relationship between cooking process and the kitchen space. Within the diasporic context, Indian American cultural critic Ketu Katrak in

her short autobiographical essay “Food and Belonging: At ‘Home’ and in ‘Alien’ Kitchens,” explores how culinary narratives, interspersed with nostalgia, manage immigrant memories, and imagined returns to the “homeland.” Commenting on her own migratory journey from Bombay to the United States, she states, “my own memory banks about food overflowed only after I left India to come to the United States as a graduate student. The disinterest in food that I had felt during my childhood years was transformed into a new kind of need for that food as an essential connection with home.... “

Research on Divakaruni

In the last few years, much research has been conducted to compare Divakaruni’s body of work to that of other contemporary women writers like Bharti Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Monica Ali, Anita Desai and Kiran Desai. Tamara Ayesha Bhalla’s work *Between History and Identity: Reading the Authentic in South Asian Diasporic Literature and Community* (2008) explores the works of South Asian diasporic writers like Arundhati Roy and Divakaruni within the framework of dialogic reading theory and deals with the reception of the text. Sandhya Tiwari’s work *Displacements and Alienation of Indians in the selected works of Chitra Divakaruni, Bharti Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri* also focuses on the problems of assimilation in the alien country as experienced by the protagonists in the fictional narratives of these women writers. In her analysis of *Mistress of Spices*, Tiwari observes that through the character of Tilo, Divakaruni has conveyed the

mysterious of the ancient mystical land and ambivalence connected straddling two polar opposite worlds. Yet, she feels that the ending is optimistic, in the sense that there is hope for assimilation and for starting life afresh in the new country. Astha Kurup looks at the works of few diasporic women writers in her study titled re-negotiating diasporic identities in the selected fictional writings of Bharti Kirchner, Jhumpa Lahiri and Monica Ali. She explores the insecurities and vulnerabilities experienced by the women characters, the bicultural pulls and conflicting relationship between the home and host land and the socio-psychological repercussions of migration in the context of diasporic literature.

Divakaruni has often been hailed by critics as a storyteller par excellence, and this research will also attempt to analyse the way she interweaves culinary stories in her migratory tales. Through the mythical magical world, she creates for her readers she also upholds the critical importance of fundamental human ethics and values common to all cultures such as compassion and empathy and her works bear testimony to her unified vision. *Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events* is an essay written by Robert A. Georges, in which he discusses the significance of stories, which in his opinion can be considered to be “surviving or traditional linguistic entities” that are closely connected to the “history and nature of man and culture” (1969:314). Metka Zupancic, in her work *Ethics of Wisdom and Compassion in the novels by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*, aptly labels her novels as, “laboratories where new ways of human coexistence are

being tested.” She further compliments her writing abilities by comparing her to a “magician who understands how to trigger the innermost reaction in her readers, so that we become permeable to the new paradigms she is laying out for us.”

The themes of female bonding and sisterhood have been the most studied ones by Divakaruni researchers. Research comparing her with other diasporic women writers is also a trend that has been followed by many research scholars. For instance, Critics like Malathy, R. (*Quest for Identity in Chitra Divakaruni's Queen of Dreams and Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" Language in India* 2012), (Vega-González, Susana. “Negotiating Boundaries in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* and Naylor's *Mama Day*, 2003), Banerjee, Debjani. (*Home and Us': Re-defining Identity in the South Asian Diaspora through the Writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Meena Alexander* 2000) and Hima Prakash (*From victimhood to empowerment in the fiction of Shauna Singh Baldwin and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni* and others compare the literary abilities of the mentioned women diasporic writers. We find an in-depth analysis in the following studies as well K.S. Dhanam (*Negotiation with the New Culture: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Mistress of Spices* 2008) and Deepika Gandhi's (*In-Between Cultures: An Exploration through the Works of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri* 2014).

Review of Selected Thesis

In the thesis titled *Selected Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Study of Diaspora Consciousness and Experience*, Ritu R. Agarwal has delved into the mechanics of assimilation and explored other core issues related to the journey of migrant population from alienation and marginalization to empowerment and settlement. She analyses the strategies Divakaruni employs to depict the culture and tradition of her country of origin in her novels and looks at how the author gives insight onto the complex diasporic identities an attempt is also made in this study to evaluate culinary, religious and mythological tropes depicted in Divakaruni's novels. At the conclusion the researcher insightfully notes that her study has shed light on various multi-layered perspectives and strategies as reflected in Divakaruni's novels as well as traced her evolution as an immensely successful diasporic woman writer of contemporary period.

Continuing with the similar theme is researcher Prabha Kanagamani J's study titled *The Theme of Alienation and Acculturation in the select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni* offers an in-depth analysis of the specific unique style of Divakaruni in her portrayal of immigrant issues and tackling of the phenomenon of alienation and acculturation. The study highlights the common diasporic dilemmas and emotional self alienation experienced by the migrant community and how certain characters can assimilate, adapt and acculturate in the new alien culture by carving own unique identities of their own. Focussing on

women centric novels like *Sister of my Heart*, *Mistress of Spices* and more the study highlights the author's use of numerous strategies like magic realism, interweaving mythological and culinary references, situating the plots in ancient Indian set up as well as contemporary American locale etc to emphasize the themes of alienation and acculturation.

In the thesis titled *Studies in the Fictional Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri: Mapping the Shift from Diaspora to beyond*, the researcher Jonal Chowdhary has focussed on the Bengali immigrant community and the way it is culturally represented, the depiction of women protagonists in Divakaruni's and Lahiri's works, the longing for home as well as the complex relationship between first- and second-generation diasporic population. Through an in-depth analysis of the women characters within the diasporic context, the study delineates the process of acculturation that the community endeavours to undergo in terms of food as well as other cultural markers to adapt and establish and settle down in the host country.

Intoning Culture, Gender, and Space in the diaspora: a study of select culinary narratives by women is the title of the research undertaken by Annam Raga Malika. As the title suggests, this research attempts to study select culinary writing by diasporic women writers. It explores nine different texts from different diasporas and looks at various phenomenon like boundary space, interstice of food and formation of

transnational identity. From exploring the many facets of food and food traditions within the framework of anthropology and religion to highlighting the different forms of food literature, food tourism and new food trends in today's times, the study analyses the food writing in the chosen texts within the framework of Homi Bhabha's "interstice" of overlapping space. It contextualizes food and then explores how the selected writers effectively utilize the trope of food to mediate subculture, analyzes food interjections in diaspora, looks at migratory culinary memoirs and highlights the relationship between food and gender in the chosen texts. The works of different authors like Esther David, Maya Angelou, Amulya Malladi and Kim Sunee to name a few, who belong to different nationalities like Indian Bene Israeli Jew, African American, Indian American, and Chinese Singaporean American respectively have been studied elaborately.

In the research titled *Third world iconography :Oleander dichotomy in Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's select novels*, the research scholar H. Shaheen explores the sociological and psychological journey of immigrant women from their homeland to the host land, as depicted in Divakaruni's novels. The study seeks to trace the iconography of diasporic women immigrants; how enroute their challenging journey they encounter myriad existential issues including the dichotomy of the traditional past and the contemporary present and how these women's path reflects the three phases of the feminine world as theorized by Elaine Showalter – female, feminine and femininity. The study also

emphasizes the different diasporic techniques like intertextuality, new historicism, cultural materialism, and literary devices like including discourses of healing through herbs and spices, divine interconnectedness and references to ancient Indian philosophies, practices and rituals incorporated in Divakaruni's novels to highlight the underlying sociological immigrant issues such as pangs of alienation and feeling of displacement felt by the gendered subaltern subjects. Yet, these women protagonists, even after encountering extremely harsh hostile environment in the host country, finally emerge stronger and more rooted. Due to their invincible faith in their ancient original culture which emphasizes values like divine communion, holistic healing through shared sisterhood and female solidarity, they are able to emerge as confident empowered third world intellectuals. The conclusion reiterates the significant contribution that Divakaruni's works have made to the South Asian American culture by weaving together her artistic humane vision with the elaborate tapestry of the vibrant Indian culture.

In the research titled *Quest for Identity in the select works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*, the researcher M. Krishnaraj begins by contextualizing Divakrauni's writing within the larger backdrop of Indian English writing, mentioning the seminal works of renowned writers like from the likes of R.K Narayan, Kamala Markandaya to younger novelists like Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai and Indira Ganesan, where the similar theme of seeking one's, identity has been dealt with.

The study then focuses on select novels of Divakaruni where the overarching theme that underlies the storyline is the journey of the individual seeking his identity, be it in any form. All the immigrant women protagonists mentioned in the study, irrespective of their age, background, caste and religious affinities are in some way or the other facing some sort of an identity crisis, and this research delves into their quest for cultural identity, gender identity as well as Indian ethnic and diasporic identity.

In the research titled *Cross-cultural experiences of Indian womanhood through a post-colonial feminist perspective: A study of the select works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*, the research scholar S. Vasigaran highlights how Divakaruni has emerged as one of the leading within the postcolonial feminist context and how she depicts the dynamics of the solidarity and womanhood, especially within the diasporic Indian women; how from facing isolation and double marginalization at the outset, they are able to slowly transcend nationalistic and cultural constructs and liberate themselves from the patriarchal mindset to open themselves up to better possibilities of the adapted culture. By ensuring a modern and independent outlook, these women abandon the shackling traditions of their ancient past and how these women protagonists form and shape their new identities is what the researcher focuses on in this study. From certain common experiences in the binary cultures of the home and the host land, the cultural dualities

faced by the newly arrived women immigrants to the adaptation in the alien culture – all these have been explored in this thesis.

Mamta Agrawal nee Mamta Rupani, in her thesis titled *The folkloric and mythic elements in the novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*, has delved into the mechanics of mythical and folkloric elements as reflected in Divakaruni's works and her contribution within the context of postcolonial epistemology. The researcher highlights the theoretical and critical issues revolving around myth and folklore and explores the connectedness between existential mythopoesis and diasporic consciousness. She analyses Divakaruni's strategies to redefine and rearticulate the cultural construction of women specially within the South Asian context by re-imagining history and refashioning the past with a feminist approach as well as incorporating magic realism and oral story telling tradition. The thesis sheds light on how Divakaruni epitomises mythopoesis by amalgamating classical myths and modern stories and how her works are an affirmation of diverse cultural values.

In the thesis titled *Themes of magic realism, myth, and culture in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's select novels*, the researcher C. Arul Renuga studies the strategies Divakaruni employs to incorporate stream of consciousness and magic realism techniques on the one hand as well as resurrect and reinvent ancient Indian myths in her diasporic fiction. The study emphasizes that the mythic framework contributes to the creation of a feminine universe where sisterhood and woman solidarity

helps empower the immigrant women characters in their struggle for survival.

In the thesis *The Journey Motif in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh*, the researcher Jai Shree has explored the journey motif from the archetypal, mythical, and psychoanalytical perspective relating it to an individuals' quest for wholeness and individuality and the way Amitav Ghosh uses this motif in his works to indicate how his characters seek to cross barriers and borders at multiple levels through their respective physical and psychological journeys. By analysing the novels – *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines* and *In an Antique Land* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* in detail, the study attempts to shed light on Ghosh's use of the journey motif as a narrative technique to reflect the illusory nature of barriers and borders. The study concludes by stating "In this era of mass migration and the concept of global village, a strict configuration of demarcating lines in the man-made maps become meaningless." and irrespective of the reason for undertaking the journey in the first place, every traveller finally desires to seek and return to the "home" space, whatever it might mean for each traveller.

Review of Research Papers

In the paper *An appetite for metaphor: food imagery and cultural identity*, the researcher Jennifer Burcham Whitt focuses on selected works of Salma Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Anita Desai and analyses the use of food imagery and food metaphor reflect in some way or the other the socio-political environment, hybridity, oppression, and gender relations. As she opines. these writers “use food and eating to symbolize cultural issues of acceptance, resistance, and preservation of culture, as well as symbols of memory, emotions, narrative history, relationships, power and consumption.” She highlights how these writers have used food imagery to describe the personal swell as cultural identity of the characters and insightfully notes “by questioning what, how, and how much a character eats, as well as how food is prepared, shared, served, avoided, or even bottled and preserved, literary scholars can gain a deeper perspective into a character’s ethnicity, status, gender, and all parts of their cultural and personal identity.

In the paper *Beyond polyandry: Exploring Draupadi’s desire in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Palace of Illusions*, the researcher Dr. Ravi Khangai highlights how Draupadi’s complicated life was entwined with seven men – her five husbands and Karna and Krishna and how her perspective about men and love and passion keeps changing as she moves from one phase of her life to another.

The Reality of the Immigrant Dream in Ayub Khan-Din's East is East and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Mistress of Spices, is the title of the research paper authored by Meena Gopalkrishna and it focuses on the techniques used by Ayub Khan and Divakaruni in the mentioned texts to voice the immigrant experience, the challenging journey, the disillusionment, the identity crisis. The huge difference between the migrant “dream” and the harsh “reality” has been depicted in the two chosen works and this paper delves deep into that highlighting issues like loss of original pure culture of their homeland, the hostility and violent racism experienced in the host land, the inevitable clashes between first- and second-generation migrant families. In her another paper on the same author, titled *The effect of time and space in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Clothes*, Meera Gopalkrishna examines the creation of meaning in Divakaruni's texts through the interweaving of time and space. Quoting various extracts from the novel *Clothes*, she analyses the narrative strategy utilized here within the critical framework of narrative theory related to time, from Ricoeur's perspective and space, from Kellman, Ronen and Zoran's perspective.

Fadhila Eka Ratnasari, in her paper titled *Displacement and diaspora: Case of cultural identity found in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake & Leila S. Chauri's Pulang*, the research scholar examines the depiction of identity crisis of first- and second-generation migrant families in the chosen works.

In the paper *The Subterranean ridges of sibling relationship in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*, the researcher Arunita Samaddar focuses on the themes of genealogy and familial affection as depicted in Divakaruni's novels. She reflects on the "the occurrence of inseparable siblings" which she says "is a recurrent presence" in many of her novels as well as on the sisterhood, close bonding, sacrificial attitude, possessiveness, and "yearning" displayed by certain women characters "to be fused with each other.

In the paper, *Indianism and nostalgia for home and homeland in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Sister of my heart*", T. Santhi Sree and M. Suresh Kumar examines nostalgia and yearning for roots and traditions related to one's origin country as depicted in the chosen novel. The researcher highlights Divakaruni's strategies to incorporate ancient Puranic myths and mythological allusions to depict the contemporary tale woven around the two diasporic women protagonists.

Subrata Kumar Das, in the paper "*Diasporic Literary worlds of three authors: Bharti Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri*", uncovers the strategies employed by the mentioned authors in their works to emphasize unhomeliness, rootlessness, displacement and the generational differences between the first- and second-generation diaspora. While the second generation wants to assimilate with the host country, the first generation yearn and pine for their mythic home country of origin, and it is this aspect of diasporic family's journey

that this paper seeks to uncover in the chosen authors selected novels. She explores Divakaruni's use of mythological references and magic realism to express the expatriate diasporic sensibility and the state of in betweenness.

In the paper *Diaspora Writings: Epiphany, Emotions and Ethics*, the researcher Jayshree Singh discusses the narratives woven around the diasporic context, including memoirs, travelogues and the like which deal with issues such as searching for roots and a sense of belongingness. The paper explores how these narratives reflect migrant memories while simultaneously examining western and Indian psyche especially regarding dealing with sense of loss and displacement that is an inevitable part of any diasporic journey. Taking instances from Jhumpa Lahiri, Ramabhai Espinet, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, the researcher reiterates the influence these writings have on the readers in terms of a deeper understanding of the actual history underlying migration as well as critical issues related to the same.

Dilemma of Belongingness in Chitra Divakaruni Banerjee's Queen of Dreams, a paper authored by Suruchi Sharma, sheds light on the respective experiences of the first- and second-generation immigrants and their unique manner of dealing with the "dilemma of belongingness" as reflected in Divakaruni's novel *Queen of Dreams*. The researcher incorporates references from other related papers

written by Malathi and C Bharathi and S. Kalamani to endorse her views. She comments on Mrs Gupta, who represents the first-generation immigrant community and her inability to totally imbibe the values of the alien country and contrasts it with Rakhi's sense of belonging with the host country despite her yearning to learn more about the country of her origin. The paper concludes by stating that towards the end of the novel. "Rakhi's metamorphosis is complete" and she has learnt to be at ease with American set up.

Liberated yet trapped: Women in Chitra Banerjee Divakranni's Arranged Marriage, the researchers Nagendra Kumar and Y. Jaipaul examine certain selected stories from the author's collection and reveal how the Bengali diasporic immigrant women depicted in these stories face the challenge and find themselves in a tug-of-war situation where even though they find themselves liberated from the former patriarchal set up of their country of origin, they are still trapped and bound by the typical Indian conventionalities and regressive expectations. Interestingly, the authors bring in Habermas's theory to explain how these women, especially the married women reflect the "Pygmalion effect". referring to Nevitt Stanford's concept of challenge and response, the paper highlights the strategies depicted by Divakaruni's protagonists to adjust to this unnerving dilemma which they find themselves subjected to in the alien country. By incorporating Bennett's concept of "constructive marginal", the authors depict the condition of these diasporic protagonists, where they are

living life on the margins of the two cultures. The paper refers to the renowned post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and incorporates the views of the acclaimed transnational feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty to describe the hybrid, uncertain space occupied by these women in their valiant attempts to adapt to their immensely challenging hostile environment they are trapped in. The dualities and extremities that these women find themselves subjected to has been explored in this paper, and the illusion that the migration to the "promised land" as it would be a blissful experience is shattered as the true harsh reality of the actual lived experience is highlighted.

In the paper titled *Fortunate lamps and fire bands: Before We Visit the Goddess as a multigenerational transcontinental tale*, Suhana PA investigates the complexities and conflicting dynamics underlying the multigenerational transcontinental relationships described in Divakaruni's novel *Before We Visit the Goddess*. The focus is on exploring the connectedness between the mothers and daughters that moves the plot forward in this intergenerational complex tale comprising of three resolute women, and the strength they eventually derive from each other's struggles. the lessons they learn from each other's life stories.

The paper *Self-Reliance and hope of women characters in the select novel of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni* highlights the vicissitudes experienced by the women characters in the novels *Sister of my heart*,

Mistress of Spices, *The Vine of desire* and *Queen of dreams*, and the perseverance they display while facing trials and tribulations in the alienated host countries. The researchers V. Kavitha and Dr. K. Rajkumar study the insecurities and alienation felt by the women protagonists in the chosen tales and how their quest for self and desire to find their own distinct identity to negotiate migrant journey propels them to become strong and hopeful which empowers them to cope with the new changing environment of the host country.

The same novel by Divakaruni is studied in the paper titled *The Parallels of Mobility and Exile in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Before We Meet (sic) the Goddess: A Cosmopolitan Reading*. The researchers Shobana Jeyasingam, Manimangai Mani, Rosli Talif and Mohammad Ewan Awang explore the way the women protagonists of this novel, even though they embrace cosmopolitanism for various reasons, yet their respective journey propels them towards a state of further exile. The study analyses the mobility of culture and migration that accompanies the Indian diasporic community; but instead of leading them towards freedom and rootedness, it becomes a cause of further estrangement and eventually becomes the cause of their rootless existence.

The paper *(E)merging Borders: Explorations of Gender and Home in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Before We Visit the Goddess*, by Preeti Shirodkar attempts to question the notions of 'borders', 'home' and

‘identity’ as imagined and experienced by the diasporic individuals and others around them and tries to establish that these borders have moved beyond being actual physical constructs to becoming personal creations of the mind. It brings forth the strategies Divakaruni employs to depict the journey of the three generational strong dynamic women – not just at a physical level but from a psychological level as well. It illustrates how ‘borders’ and walls get established in the first place and at which levels and how they become dividing factors in the long run for these women protagonists.

From a review of the available literature, it can be figured that Divakaruni’s works have mostly been studied from the perspectives of feminism, magic realism, women bonding and diasporic themes such as issues of displacement, assimilation, identity crisis and nostalgia. The aim of this study would be to add to the existing knowledge by analysing the tropes of food and culture in her novels as there is lot of scope in this area. Along with the framework provided by the past research, this study attempts to further supplement it with fresh perspectives gained from exploring her works through the culinary lens. This study will be an in-depth analysis of her works and would analyse the intricacies and complexities of the migrants struggling with the bi-cultural pulls. It will examine the way issues of anthropology and ethnography have been dealt with in diasporic fiction, especially regarding Divakaruni’s works.

Also, especially relevant in these post-covid times, is the sudden surge of interest in the culinary. Across the globe, whether it is related to immunity boosting diet or ‘comfort’ food or any other thoughts or substances that we ‘nourish’ ourselves with, suddenly the ‘culinary’ aspect and its vital role in nourishing and strengthening us has come to the centre stage. Considering its regained significance in these times, the attempt to study Divakaruni’s employment of the culinary motif to rejuvenate and reconstruct the complicated diasporic identities in her works becomes even more relevant. This research study seeks to analyze culinary as a space of cultural as well as literal rootings with special focus on its therapeutic properties. Apart from carving a niche for herself in the field of women diasporic writer, she will continue to remain relevant in times to come as a writer whose works, woven with myth and culinary magic, offers a panacea to heal not just the quintessential displaced identities, but to all those who need ‘healing’.