The Foot Prints Of Women From Conventional To Ultra-Modernism Depicted Through Divakaruni's Oleander Girl

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Abstract

"Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."
– Virginia Woolf

In accordance with the evolution of society, the status of women is also evolving, particularly in globalised India. The position of women in the classical period and in the contemporary period of India is usually perceived to be opposing poles that in no way meet. Despite traditional patriarchal standards that also demarcate women's movement and areas of activity, the repute of women could not remain unaffected on such occasions. The line between traditional lifestyle and modernity in Indian socio-cultural discourse is becoming increasingly more blurred. For instance, public as well as personal issues have also been modified, with more women who are abled and inclined to take part in public lifestyles. So, where does this "conventional style" fit? What is the relationship between that lifestyle and the concept of "girl," which has been its (mandated) bearer and perpetuator for centuries? How does patriarchal society address the new adjustments that have occurred in women's popularity? Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni poses these questions within the context of Oleander Girl, in addition to a few troubles such as the bounds or crossings over the bounds of the private and non-private spheres in modern-day West Bengal; taboo-breaking realities inclusive of inter-racial relationships and babies born out of wedlock; and border-crossing as a need for redefining identification in the face of the uncertainty of return. The intention of this study is to confront Indian women regarding the differences between paradigms like "culture" and "conventional" foisted on them by Indian nationalists or Western ideologies and "modernity".

Key terms: Tradition, Modernity, Indian women, Divakaruni, Oleander Girl

1.   Introduction

"Ebb and flow, ebb and flow, our lives.
Is that why we're fascinated by the steadfastness of stars?
The water reaches my calves. I begin the story of the Pleiades,
women transformed into birds, so swift and bright that no man could snare them."
(Banerjee, 2005:11)

As a diasporic author, Divakaruni, explores the amazing variety of Indian women's identities, both within India and overseas, with the aid of her female characters, whom she brings back and forth from and to India in her writing. Divakaruni's Oleander Girl (2013) equals some myths, although being interlaced with additives and testimonies from our current present day world, resulting in a harmonious mix of lifestyle "delusion" and modernity. Indian mythology revolves around a variety of gods and goddesses whose movements are seen as models for human behaviour. The Ramayan is such a legend that is normally viewed as a story of (the Indian) female's virtues or more appropriately, the repercussions of her irresponsibility. The novel also offers a moral about limits and their consequences, which is the focus of this study, due to its reliance on female behavior.

1.1   Indian Tradition Myths and Symbols

In Indian mythology, the line (Regai) that Lakshmana has drawn around the house, which he shares with his brother Rama and Rama's wife - Sita. According to legend, King Rama had long gone on a quest to find a golden deer (Maricha, the Rakshasa in disguise). Since Rama has been returning for longer time, Sita starts off by crying, pleading with her brother-in-law, Lakshmana, to go and get Rama. Lakshmana eventually agrees, but only if Sita does not cross the road he has drawn while he is looking for his brother. Sita is pleasantly and effectively ready within the circle for Rama and his brother after Lakshamana's departure. Meanwhile, the novel's villain, the Rakshasa king Ravana (who wants to capture Sita)[1], arrives disguised as a mendicant and asks her for alms. To response "Atithi Devo Bhava"[2] (offering alms – as per Indian practice) to Ravana, Sita crooses the Regai drawn by her brother-in-law. According to the traditional lifestyle, there ought to be no barrier between the donor and the recipient of the gift, considering the fact that this would violate the concept of the donor's free will. Consequently, Sita crosses the Lakshman Regai.

The Regai really denotes a restriction, a purportedly defensive boundary for the female who is left on her own at the back. On the other hand, the metaphor represents safety against intruders and even criminals, while the protagonist's family is in hazard. Crossing the Regai and exploring what lies beyond it might be regarded as a challenge. The form of the Regai is a circle that was chosen at random: it has no start or finish. It is made up of a limitless variety of dots that do not let anyone in or out. In space, the distance inside a circle is impenetrable. It is only viable to depart or enter by means of piercing it, which implies some degree of aggression. The circle behaves in the same way. On a higher stage, the circle may be thought of as the line that divides the sector (also known as a "globe" due to its form, which resembles a bubble) into hemispheres: the Western/Eastern hemisphere and the Northern/Southern hemisphere, both of which have epistemological and political significance. By looking beyond the plot of the Lakshman Regai, it may be carried out to a ramification of situations: 1) the present day Indian socio-cultural framework, of which women are an element; 2) the one regarding migration and identities that go beyond bodily and non-physical borders. The Lakshman Regai is an allegory for traditional requirements that hold individuals within the bounds of society—in this example, girls—within the bounds that assure a certain "normalcy" in how that society is understood to paintings. The heroine and other key female characters within the novel move the Lakshman Regai, both within and outside of the doors of Indian society. The writer focuses on female characters through subculture, modernism and so on.

2.   The impacts of globalisation and of modernisation on marriage and family roles in India through Oleander Girl

The author, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni begins by introducing Korobi, the protagonist, whose character is just like that of the plant "oleander" that her name represents: strong, stubborn, and scuffling against all odds. Oleander is a commonplace plant in India, as if the Indian soil is secretly defensive and feeding it. Korobi's mother, the daughter of the Roys, an old "traditional" Brahmin Hindu circle of relatives, (the signifiers—"traditional," "Brahmin Hindu"— that come to define the girl's identification) activities to America to complete her training earlier than she was even born. She falls in love with an African American man there and will

become pregnant as a result. She travels to India to search for her parents' advantages and spend time with them before returning to the USA and marrying there. She had a dispute with her father, falls down the steps, and dies after breaking the traditional guidelines of her commune, "the Lakshman Regai", about marriage alliances (her future husband is not a Brahmin Hindu, and worse yet, he is black). The little newborn girl lives with her grandparents, who treat the child as though she had been their own daughter, but they never tell her the truth about her parentage until she is a juvenile. Korobi is set to marry Rajat, the son of the Boses, a Westernized rich Hindu family but who are presently experiencing serious monetary difficulties. The author has set diverse problems for the younger couple to conquer before the wedding moves location. Rajat is continuously accompanying with Sonia, his former ultra-Westernized and wealthy female friend. Korobi finds a very good-looking and clean-going suitor in America, Vic, so as to check the energy in their feelings, resulting in a love-cum-arranged marriage wherein the protagonists are in love with each other, but also reap the advantages of their families. (Grover, 2012)

Marriages in India, as in other South Asian countries, have mostly been arranged as it is still the norm. Nonetheless, along with the changes brought about by globalisation, industrialization, and the modernization of the Indian state, especially after 1990, and access to more information and job opportunities for women, marriage types in India have also diversified. Additionally, education, especially for girls, has opened up opportunities for them when it comes to marriage. Parents who belong to lower middle or middle class families their son or daughter to take up jobs as the responsibility of the family, and lives together under the same roof, and will significantly rise. Marriages in India, like those in other South Asian nations, have traditionally been organized.

Furthermore, schooling has broadened prospects for girls, in particular in relation to marriage. Parents tolerate or maybe urge the ones from lower middle or medium-magnitude houses to work due to the fact that the earnings of their own families will dramatically increase whilst still living under the same roof. After doing research in India for numerous years, it could be stated that, at the same time as some communities and households demand dowry from the woman's circle of relatives, her income constitutes a good contribution towards that aim, relieving the parents

of some of the burden. Higher-class women, on the other hand, are not required to work. As a result, they can only achieve this if they remember themselves as modern girls who do need to spend their time at home. In keeping with empirical research, work for contemporary Indian women also entails socialising, assembling men outside their households, and sharing similar passions and existence. All those trends in Indian society have prompted some youths to form relationships.

The new India presented here offers a context that is comfortable for modern women: those who work in public spaces, those who interact outside their community/neighbourhood, those who socialise with people with whom they share elements other than caste, community, and language (they can communicate in English). Thus, although it is still not the norm, more couples are now marrying out of love while obtaining the support of their families. Usually called "love-cum-arranged marriage," this is an ideal type of liaison combining the "traditional" with the "modern" (Mody 2002).

3. Conventional and ultramodern Style in Contemporary Indian Women

The line between lifestyle and modernity in Indian socio-cultural discourse is becoming increasingly more blurred. While a few still accept that traditional requirements (Beck 1995, Upadhya and Vasavi 2006) are important to maintain the pure personal area from the polluting public space (Grover 2012), others consider that they can violate them to and fro without harming either (Puri 1999, Grover 2012). Woman is the bearer and perpetuator of traditional lifestyle; she entrusts the obligation of searching after her personal vicinity, ensuring that the unit she is preserving, specifically the family. The man, who is also called the breadwinner, is obligated to exit into the public realm and fetch what the family calls for. According to such ideas, public encounters are intrinsically unclean, but a man is powerful enough to resist them. He has the opportunity to cleanse himself of all impurities and return to the pure environment protected by a woman (Grover 2012).

The purpose of this article is to follow Indian women's attitudes towards standards like "culture" and "conventional" foisted on them by Indian nationalists or Western ideologies, and "modern-day" ("modernity"). These two conceptions have been forced on those women, who are now caught in the middle of a conundrum

of existing inside and lately isolated classes. Because Indian society is a composite of traditional ways of life and modernity, women (A brand new Indian women) are expected to be both traditional and modern. In other words, her cutting-edge aspect ought to no longer be "too modern-day" (that is, not turn out to be "Western"), but must be contemporary enough to keep up with societal changes. The differences between vintage and new, conventional and present day, Indian and Western, have blurred. It places a strain on women, who find it difficult to discern the lines that should and should not be crossed.

The women's issue in India is summarised by Chaudhuri as follows:

- Women's repute is interpreted in terms of "subculture" and "modernity." But the definition of "subculture" and what exactly constitutes "subculture" remain unanswered (288).
- "Subculture" has been contested, with the idea of being re-invented and valorized in the 19th century.
- The impact of the contemporary bourgeois domesticated girl on the Indian traditional girl's model.

The preconceived notion is that women in the East no longer have or cannot express their free will. As a result of their subjugation by an assumed oppressive subculture or their (similarly assumed) meekness, there is a significant difference between women in the West and those in the East (binaries are best used here as widely widespread phrases).[3]

"Free will" is the conventional time of a subject, in line with the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The significant questions are: "What does it imply to behave (or pick) freely?" and "What does it suggest to be ethically accountable for one's actions (or alternatives)?" These troubles are intertwined due to the fact that moral obligation calls for, but does not require, freedom of action.[4]

Apart from "choosing freely," it may also relate to Western feminists' idea of "strong point," as contrasted to Indian women's alleged lack of individuality. The idea of free will, however, has its origins in faith. There are several verses inside the Bible that consist of this idea, but the Indian thought of God and free will differs from how Western religions and discourses view them. In Ramanuja's Vedarthasangraha, "God appears as the

only one who fulfils what human beings (no longer simply girls) choose or suppose, but they do no longer have/possess loose desire." (11)

The contemporary woman's concern, in place of the traditional one, is associated with unfastened will, which is described as individuality and the capacity/freedom to make decisions for whom one is accountable, thus making choices more in accordance with the well-being of the family and of the network. Korobi, the female heroine of Divakaruni's story, is portrayed as a combination of tradition and modernity, capable of moving effects from one thing to the other. If the idea of "freedom" or "loose will" is to be linked to the concept of the "new Indian", one ought to first become aware of the many features of the "new Indian" nowadays. Some of those characteristics are related to being worldwide and cosmopolitan. The new Indian is ethnic rather than Desi[5]. Most significantly, the brand new Indian is free. Chaudhuri takes this concept and applies it to advertising and the media, as well as discussing the societal implications. The researcher has tried to incorporate these thoughts into this evaluation of Divakaruni's novel, noting that characters such as Korobi, Korobi's (lifeless) mother, and Mrs. Bose. These characters are some examples of Chaudhuri's findings regarding "what's new within the Indian girl" and "what is vintage in the Indian woman" (382).

The "antique" detail of the new Indian woman's identity is that she is an "own family woman," which refers to the notion that a woman's primary obligation is to have and keep her own family. This conventional idea holds that the bond between the two conceptions of "girl" and "circle of relatives" is unbreakable, and that one cannot exist without the alternative. Sushmita Sen (the Indian lady to win the Miss Universe title) as soon as informed the sector, "The essence of a girl is motherhood, and it teaches a person to love and care," Chaudhuri recalls (382-383). As a "traditional" concept, the "girl" appears to be essential to her own family. According to Chaudhuri, the "new" component of the Indian woman is a hybridization of the "traditional" and the "modern-day."[6] "Today's woman is old enough to care, even though she is young enough to tell him [men] what she wants. She offers some standard advice to formidable corporate leaders." (382)

Korobi is a move between a "historical" and a "new" Indian girl. Her genealogy is her "ancient" aspect: she comes from a long line of orthodox Brahmin Hindus with sturdy morals. Before her father's parentage is disclosed, she is seen as the inheritor of an historic Hindu culture: a candy orphan female nurtured by her grandparents, who are the most respected in the city. Her birth and upbringing took place in a completely old house, which exemplifies the persistence of Hindu values. The backyard round the corner is famous for an exceedingly antique Durga temple, which even the wealthiest households would like to collect. Because of this very conventional history, Korobi is imprinted with a conventional "antique" facet. But, just as society is changing, making room for a new marketplace whilst incorporating the "antique" Hindu society, the antique residence of the Roys is being converted as well: the author portrays it steadily breaking aside without a hope of restoration, while Sarojini's loved granddaughter is changing each day. She first postpones her marriage to Rajat, then flies to the US to locate her father, gets her hair chopped short, and accepts Vic's relationship on a temporary basis. All of these are perceived as risks in India to the traditional Korobi, which is vanishing day by day. Her grandma, the epitome of the American way of life, is the only person who believes in her.

Korobi's "modernity" is not measured in terms of public space or Westernization; as a substitute, it intrudes on her on a personal level. A double border-crossing—an illegitimate child of mixed parentage and blood—unites her Otherness. This is exacerbated by the fact that the religion she represents forbids all impurities, all mixes, all blending, exogamy, and so on. Her fame as a girl about to marry would be jeopardised if all became uncovered. She is worried about the response of her fiancé's own family to the news that she is a half-breed from an illegitimate courtship. She is, in the long run, prevalent for whom she is, in spite of the shock she has triggered. Through the Boses, Indian society has broken down the limitations of an inflexible subculture, taking into account modifications and the breaking of taboos. Simultaneously, one realises that "way of life" needs to be abandoned now because; ultimately, it is the "subculture" that saves us. "Modern" women are probably "exceptional" and hardworking (Mrs. Bose) or "evil," manipulative and deceptive (Mrs. Bose) (Sonia). There are also girls who can be "modern-day" without abandoning their "way of life" (Korobi).

Mrs. Bose is a female who married a person from a wealthier circle of relatives than hers out of love. She had struggled her whole life to reveal herself as "a shopkeeper's devious daughter" (Divakaruni 30), as her father-in-law used to consult her. They have built solid companies along with their husband that have earned them a top-notch reputation. Mrs. Bose has advanced through time from a simple female from a modest domestic to a sophisticated woman who runs a commercial enterprise and is frequently visited by the rich and powerful. She is a hybrid between an Indian prosperous woman who values traditional family values and a Westernized upper-class woman who can only be addressed as "Maman," while Mr. Bose is known as "Papa" and Korobi is known as "Cara."Mrs. Bose could have favoured Sonia, her son's former female friend, as a daughter-in-law due to her sophistication and the connections of her own family, which could have assisted her personal commercial enterprise. Divakaruni challenges "modernity" and the impact of globalisation on "conventional" societies, which have most effectively advanced inside the Western financial system by means of pushing the current, Westernised Sonia apart and bringing to the fore the "unspoiled" Korobi/Cara, who comes from the oldest and most traditional families of the city. Mrs. Bose had this to mention about Korobi: "... she's a candy girl, beautifully unspoiled." But it is as though she has been transported to another century. Mrs. Bose will have quite a few attempts to mould her to fit into their surroundings" (32).

It is Korobi's adherence to tradition, to the ancient Hindu religion, that saves the Boses from monetary ruin. Korobi is the granddaughter of a vintage Brahmin circle of relatives who lived in a vintage house with an old Durga temple in its courtyard, and he or she is the opportunity for the Boses to attract a crucial investor, Mr. Bhattacharya, "a candidate of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Party" (26) and a person who wants to "create alliances with the right form of human beings" (27) along with the Roys (Korobi's grandparents). Korobi's mother is the most "modern-day" of all of the female characters in the novel. She is a decision-maker in a generation while subculture is nonetheless at its peak, and she is characterised with the aid of courage and what the Western language refers to as "loose will." Defying one's father (and a judge) has become uncommon, especially when it comes to a situation like the one she found herself in: being an unmarried Brahmin Hindu woman pregnant by a

man of one-of-a-kind ancestry. Divarakaruni makes a decision to "kill" her person even as maintaining her ghost "alive" is a good way to learn the reality of her toddler's paternity and reconcile him with her history. Nonetheless, the bond between father and daughter, while nice and even heartbreaking, is not effective enough to influence Korobi to stay in the United States, as her grandma feared. Her Indian origins—her grandparents, her fiancé – are more potent than her paternal lineage. As a result, the writer constructs a "cutting-edge" form of dating between father and daughter, with the latter becoming a transnational character who travels between Asia and America (26 & 27). Several instances of border-crossing may be observed in Oleander Girl: The interaction of truth and a dream or phantasm: the crossing of truth's obstacles or the interplay of truth and a dream or phantasm mother's ghost visits her several times at night, attempting to inform her of the story of her beginning.

There are numerous crossings of both material and immaterial national borders: Korobi's mother (and later Korobi) travels to and fro over the USA/India border; while the mother dies, the unborn infant survives. The breach of taboos by a Brahmin Hindu lady (Korobi's mother) represents the third example of border-crossing. Finally, in current India, there is a difference between "tradition" and "modernity" that is based on either a separation ("border") or an interconnection ("crossing borders") between the personal and public spheres. In these paintings, there are various cloth crossings of country-wide borders. Korobi's mother first leaves India to stay in America rather than returning to India permanently. Her aims, however, change, and she or he returns to India totally for the sake of fulfilling her responsibilities, with no purpose of staying. Unexpected events change her course all the time while she dies via a twist of fate, transcending the boundaries of materialism and truth as we know it. Border-crossing has intangible symbolic elements: not only does the female cross "the circle" of our reality, but she enters a socio-cultural realm that changes something in her (the child) and has the potential to cause further consequences (the baby is a hybrid).

Aside from crossing countrywide borders, the woman has crossed the Lakshman Regai with the aid of breaching taboos: she becomes pregnant with a man from outside her community, caste, and even race. What's more, she is pregnant, but not married. That is an unthinkable taboo in Bengali Bhadralok. [7] She violates additional material barriers by returning to India to try to find her father's blessing; she becomes pregnant with a hybrid and nonetheless illegitimate baby girl in her womb. When searching for Korobi from the moment she was born in her mother's womb till now, there are multiple circle crossings to be located. What country does she belong to, having been conceived in the United States via an excessive-caste Indian mother and an African American, and then delivered to Calcutta through her unmarried mother's womb?

More than that, as a foetus without identification, a name, or organization, that unique Korobi of that specific time and area is caught in the middle, neither individual nor non-character. Her life is living on the precipice of crossing the Lakshman Regai, (her mother's womb) to start. The child lady quickly departs the womb for the outside world, shifting from an internal convex globe (her mother's womb) to an external convex globe (outside the womb). Korobi's going back to the United States as a person to find her father similarly complicates the pathways described by means of her many and round crossings (as she comes to a decision to return to India). Korobi is, for this reason, a hybrid that, in preference to a hyphen that divides, creates a bridge between numerous locations by means of crossing borders. She is in-between and belongs to each nation (connecting one international, represented by her grandmother, future husband, and mother and father-in-law, to the other, represented by her father); she is in-between and belongs to each culture, respecting "subculture" at the same time as remaining "present day." She belongs to two races or ethnicities.

Korobi's half-real and half-dream connection with her mother's ghost is like any other immaterial border-crossing. To accustom the perusers with the unconventional intrigue of Korobi's condition for identity, Divakaruni employs magic realism, that is, Korobi's sleep is continuously disturbed by a ghost-like thing who turns out to be her mother, who wants her daughter to learn the truth about who she definitely is. The ghost wishes Korobi to fly to America for you to locate her father, who, no matter her past, due to her grandfather's claims, remains alive.

Travelling from side to side from reality/life to unreality/dream is connected via the habitual crossing of countrywide borders, which suggests that there is always more to it than simply someone's journey. The novel, though, is not entirely made up of phantasms and half-truths. On the contrary, it is mostly based on the portrayal of a changing India in a globalised world, which ends up in changes in social dynamics and gender roles inside the non-public and public realms.

4.   Conclusion

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Oleander Girl reflects the price of traditions and the results of globalisation in India by tying them to women's status. She is a diasporic author who has written considerably about migratory girls, and she has now turned her consciousness to Indian women and prefers to stay there. "Tradition" and "modernity" have usually been shaky terms, and they are even more so now. They are related to the difficulties of girls, who are compelled to find a method to be accepted by society whilst defining their personal identities. Although the protagonist is a hybrid who crosses numerous barriers and frontiers, he is ultimately changed into a person who adheres to generally generalised societal norms. If Korobi's mother defies marital taboos at a time when such changes were more difficult than when Korobi herself could, the protagonist simply chooses to defy them by rejecting NRI Vic's proposal and returning to India, to her Indian fiancé, and her "new" Indian woman fame.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." - Simone de Beauvoir

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