

# Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as an Adept in Creating a Matriarchal Home Out of the Conventional Male World in her Fictional World: An Appraisal

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper is a humble attempt aimed at exposing the strength and influence of female bonding. Women in association with other women can rise above men and attain a Rower of their own, which will release them from isolation, freedom from oppression and them to begin a life afresh so as to make themselves responsible and accountable for their own life.*

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, misfortunes, feminism, matriarchy, sisterhood, myths.*

There are only two genders in the whole world, one is male and the other is female. There are lots of people who have spoken for the equality between men and women but still the goal of equality has not been achieved yet. Women have always been dominated by the men in the patriarchal society where men are the head of the household and the rule makers. Men are the supreme authority and women are followers. When we hear these things, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is not the new or surprising things because it is still being practiced in our society and there aren't any women in the world that had not been through this discrimination at least once in their life time. It is not that, women haven't fight for their rights but the fact is that nobody is there to hear their voices. Women always wanted to gain their rights and they also fought for it, but it is their misfortunes that all their opportunities and privileges are always taken by men from them.

The most outstand feature of India is a strong patriarchal and patrilocal character of this state. Majority of Indian states are patriarchal with only few examples of matrilocal and matrilineal structures like Kerala. In patriarchal society both boys and girls take their identity from the father. But while the son is recognized as a permanent member of a family, the girls are more luckily be viewed as a transit element of this unit to another predominantly husband's family. This also influences inheritance and resource distribution inside family.

In the Indian culture, women have always been in a lower status than men and in this terms Indian women display great reserve, respect and submissive mannerisms when they speak to men. The rule "Being a male-dominant society, men rule and women follow" applies in every aspect to Indian society structure. A patriarchal social system can be defined as a system where men are in authority over women in all aspects of society. Some characteristics of a patriarchal system include (i) Male Dominance: In a patriarchal system, men make all decisions in both society and in their family, hold all positions of power and authority and are considered superior (ii) Male Identification: Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic and competitiveness. Each of these qualities contributes to male identification in a patriarchal system (iii) Male Centeredness: In a patriarchal system, the center of activity and progression is on men and what they do to move the society forward. In any patriarchal system, men will be the focus and developer of all events and inventions, men will be the heroes in all situations, and men will be the center of social engagement, fun and entertainment (iv) Obsession with control: men living in a patriarchal system or society must be in control of all times. They have a desire to control all society and family situations and must make all decisions regarding finances and education.

Additionally, in a patriarchal society, the oppression of women is emphasized. The term oppression means to push down or restrict; therefore, women are not allowed to rise up to leadership levels or make decisions. Women are also not allowed to demonstrate independence or suggest changes to any social order. In essence, women also have a role in a patriarchal society, but only in a sense that is submissive and subservient to men. According to Simone de Beauvoir Feminist Theory is similar to critical theory which focuses on social status of two genders i.e., man and woman in the patriarchal societies. Its main concern is rights of women. For example voting rights, property rights, equal pay in the office, equal opportunities which are the things that women always want to achieve in their life. Men get all these rights and privileges

without any obligations but only the women face obstacles on their way. "Besides these, Feminist theory talks about the other rights of women such as the right to control their own body in case of sexual reproduction, rights to self- determination and self- expressions. It continues to raise the question on women relationship to men and other women. It begins to challenge the roles of genders in the society within the social institution such as family, marriage, etc. It creates a group of women who join hand in hand and raise their voice against the domestic violence, sexual harassment and many other form of discrimination that exist in the society. Basically, they attempt to narrow the gap between two genders. Though they advocate a lot on women issues and problems, feminism is still in the sample place where it used to be several years ago. There has been no change in the way of thinking of men towards women. Men have always been treated as living being and women as an object. The patriarchal society never accepts the fact that all good qualities are kept in feminine forms. Manu, author of the great law book Manava Dharma Shastra says:

When women are worshipped, there the Gods are delighted; but where they are not worshipped, all religious ceremonies become futile (Manu Smriti).

Here the phrase 'women are worshipped' doesn't mean that the men have to offer poojas and prayers towards women but it signifies a feeling of profound love and admiration. Agreeing this, the Bhagavad Gita sounds out:

And of feminine forms I am fame (Kirti), prosperity (Sri), speech (Vac), memory (Smrti), intelligence (Medha), firmness (Dhrti) and patience (Kshama) (Bhagavadgita- X-34).

The fact of the matter is there is no book in the universe which praised women sky high excepts the Holy books, Vedas and Manu Smriti, the wedding mantras of the Vedas are more beautiful than the love duets in romantic films, just in reverse there are hundreds of negative remarks on woman in ancient Tamil literature, for instance:

**“பொம்பள சிரிச்சா போச்சு, புகையிலை விரிச்சா போச்சு”**  
(Pombala siricha pochu, pugaiyila virucha pochu)

There are minimum number of hundreds of anti-women proverbs and sayings like this in any world languages. Men criticize women at all at ages of life and frame or assign a specified name to women according to her state of position, but men is always men even though he undergoes in some particular way, without permanently losing their essence. Women is not given a exact place that she deserve, if she got a deserved place then she is always treated as marginalized and criticized by the society; really women plays a vital role in the family, she is basically still confined to the household and supports her husband and children and remains with them in all desperate situations and boosts them to be courageous, face the consequences through her moral support. She is the maker of history by marrying a man, which still means subordinate to a man practically.

The Indian women born and brought up in Indian setup have to follow all rituals practiced in the system. If any women who deny the practice of rituals and customs constituted by our patriarchal society then she would be treated as a sin to the society. A woman has to depend on a man at every stage of life, as a girl she has to depend upon her father; after marriage, a girl goes to her husband's house, and so the patriarchal society think that girls are burden for them and sons will earn and take care of them. So the subjugation of a girl starts from her family, as a wife comes to her husband's house after marriage, her husband thinks that she is in a subordinate position and he is more powerful and strong. She could die subject to the domination of her husband towards her last phase of life and in between she has to adjust herself and live with her son. This experience of suppression destroys women's self-respect, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-identity and sets limits to her cherished desire. Even though she sacrifice all her dreams and desires, the patriarchal society never leave her, still they give names to all her activities and stages of life. For example she is a 'daughter' while she depend on her father, after marriage she become 'wife' depending her husband, 'sister' to her brothers, 'mother' to her children and when she lose her husband she is a 'widow'. Hence freedom and independence are two alien words, are not unknown to any woman, throughout her lifetime. In the joint family system, the role of woman is very important in the patriarchal society but not given any importance and treated as a marginalized one. Women have to undergo a lot of situations and problems like dowry, female infanticide, sexual harassment, widowhood child marriage, child abuse and divorce. These are unethical social practices prevailing in the society.

From time immemorial India has predominantly been a patriarchal society. Man occupied a predominant place in every sphere of life leaving woman as a fragile creature to depend upon him for everything beginning from her existence to her substance. In such a circumstance, a women's struggle in a male dominated society can be but easily fathomed. She was considered god for nothing when it come to do

something intellectual or artistic. Going to school or reading and writing were not something she was capable of, her only work was to bring forth children, rear them up and look after household works. Operating with such background, it was inconceivable that women were able to think, study or able to make decisions, could express themselves in the form of speech, poetry, storytelling, art, etc. To depict a clear picture of an Indian woman and her role in the family, society, poetry, drama, philosophy, religion, art and literature one must dive deep into the timeline ever since India commenced recording its history and development in the form of writing.

Women's writing emerged as a distinctive category in Indian English Literature in the Post Independence era and it has given a new dimension to Indian writing in English. Numerous social, political, psychological and even legal barriers prevented Indian women from realizing their creativity and identity for a long time. They do not become the producers of meaning but instead become its consumers. In this paradigm, they have only the option of either accepting or critiquing the male discourse and norms. But in both cases they need to depend upon the male discourse that produces those norms. Moreover, they lose their power to question them and are forced to accept the male norms in whatever form they are. So women's writing in the post- independence India has been deeply involved in addressing the various issues pertaining to women, irrespective of their status, class, caste and race. This process involved a gradual transition from the acceptance of their silence, oppression and marginality to self-expression, self-assertion and redefinition of their identity. The protagonists in the contemporary women's writing therefore are no longer invisible or silent; they are clearly visible and vocal and claim their position as the major stakeholders of the society. They claim this position by constant critique, resistance and subversion of the andocentric tradition.

Writing is a process of encoding all that is imagined, understood, fantasized and speculated or, in other words, of the worlds within and without the medium of language. Indian women novelists writing in English have shared a great deal along with their male counterparts to put India on the global literary world. The progressive voice of these writers is very prominent. The contemporary Indian women novelists writing in English reflect the experiential realities that they go through. Thus the contemporary novelists exhibit a new aura in expressing their new found position which empowers them to be individuals on their own. In the post- independence era, the Indian women novelists writing in English have come to terms with their own independence and their multiple realities. They are fully conscious of their marginal status in society and are eager to write back. They are aware that marginality is intrinsically political and that it is expressive of unequal power relations. The contemporary women novelists thus dwell deep into their silences and make women visible in multiple ways. They foreground the histories of desire, self-perception, self-assertion, self-respect and individual motivation as issues of immediate concern. They carve a female space within their writing, particularly within the novelist discourse by positing resistance to generic as well as metaphoric boundaries. Indian women writers today accept their traditional roles as women only with awareness of being individuals who can consolidate their place and identity in society.

It was only in the late 50s and the 1960s that women writers started their own works of fiction. However, the novels of the women writers of this period were mostly novels of self-discovery and therefore were always autobiographical in nature. Thus a thorough study about the women novelists is highly warranted to explore the various experiential realities of Indian women in diverse circumstances. The creative world that the novelists portray tells a lot about the changes that have come in the women over the ages. One early woman novelist in whose writing the personal and the political merged is Nayantara Sahgal. Sahgal's novels deal with the lives of the Indian elite, their hypocrisy and superficial values. Almost all of Sahgal's novels show how the Western-educated elite have borne the responsibility of political power. A writer who has attempted to look beyond the elite in Kamala Markandaya, the major concern of all her novels is the friction between tradition and modernity, the conflict between the East and the West. Anita Desai showed an interest in social and political matters. Her novel features westernised, educated and upper middle class women who have the freedom of choice. Shashi Deshpande, another important Indian English woman novelist, has contributed immensely to the making of the Indian English literary canon. Her writings question the oppression of women at different levels, including sexual oppression, within and outside home.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the leading as well as most prolific fiction writers of Indian English Literature. She is the immigrant writer reevaluates the role of Indian woman in her novels. The themes include immigration, the South Asian experience, history, myth and celebrating diversity. She draws the materials for her writing from her own experiences and also from the vast canvas of the other Indian woman, as an Indian immigrant writer settled in San Francisco, America is a familiar voice in Indian Diaspora. She is an award winning author and poet. She writes for both adult and children, her books have

been translated into twenty languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Russian and Japanese. She teaches creative writing at the University of Houston. She is the author of the novels *Black Candle, Arranged Marriage, Leaving Yuba City, The Mistress of Spice, The Unknown Errors of Our Lives, Sister of My Heart, The Vine of Desire* etc. Divakaruni has attempted to create a comprehensive picture of South Asian family life. She writes about what she knows and what she feels, she is best in exploring the themes of love, friendship, assimilation, self-analysis and discovery. She shares the emotion of her protagonists in her novels and finds a mode of feminist expression in them.

Feminism means the theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes. It is an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Feminism is a movement, which strives to put woman on equal status with men. In a patriarchal society, women are under privileged and they are deprived of their rights and identities. In a male chauvinistic society, over the centuries, women have been treated as an object of sex, being born to satisfy the needs of men, being denied her identity and individuality; she has always been treated as "the other". Patriarchal ideology succeeds in presenting woman as immanence and man as transcendence. Hence, women are forced to struggle for their own space and freedom. Liberation for women lies in her understanding of her own mind and body, in addition to forging sisterhood with her own gender to fight against the domination of patriarchal ideology and society. The radical feminist argues that, the freedom and equality of woman is possible only by over throwing the political system conceived by men. Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the theme that ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. Indian woman novelists have offered a new dimension to the Indian Literature, by their panoramic view of the lives of women. Feminists throw a challenge on the age-long tradition of gender differentiation; it is perhaps the most powerful movement that swept the literary world in the recent decades. Rabindranath Tagore, Kamini Roy, Ismat Chughtai, Kamala Das, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Lalithambika Antharjanam are some of the elemental feminist writers in India who wrote in regional languages. Many Indian novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity, which is imposed as a patriarchal society. However, with the development of time, feminism has been established in India, setting the patriarchal predominance to certain extent.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a by-product of this post modern frame of mind. Her basic mental state is revealed in her two novels *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart* is to create a matriarchal home out of the male conventional world. The male world is not completely shut, but there is an effort obviously to connect the two, also there is a definitely clear attempt in both spheres at defining them in different space. In both her novels the common habitual is rejected, so the automatic rejection of a male, leads to follow a female as a protagonist. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is the protagonist, who learns to be a mistress on a remote island, which even cannot be located on the regular map.

'The island has been there forever', said the snakes,' the old one also. Even we who saw the mountains grow from beds of rock on the ocean bed, who were there when Samudra Puri, the perfect city, sank in the aftermath of the great flood, do not know their beginning'  
... 'the island...what does it look like ? And she?'

We have only seen it from far: green slumbering volcano, red sands of beaches, granite outcrops like grey teeth. Nights when the old one climbs the highest point, she is a pillar of burning. Her hands send the thunder writing across the sky' (24).

It is a world in which everything turned upside-down because the terrific and the dangerous volcano is green in (flourishing) colour, while the beach sands where one will sit normally pleasant is painted in red (dangerous) colour. The island has been there for a long time, but not discovered by anyone, the female creates their universe out of the conventional traditional world. The real sites are geographical representation to which the protagonist Tilo and the other mistresses have sent.

'skyscrapers of silver glass by a lake wrote as ocean, furcoated men And women, white like the snow that lines the pavements, crossing The street to avoid dark skin. Brownsugar girls in flimsy bright dresses, Leaning lipsticked on shantytown porches, waiting for customers. Marble Mansion walls embedded with glass shards to tear a man's palms to strips. Pothole roads lined with beggars whose skin can't hold in their jagged bones. A woman watching through her barred window a world beyond her reach, while on her forehead the marriage sindur presses down like a coin of blood. Narrow cobble streets, shuttered houses, men in fez eating mejdool dates and spitting out infidel dog as an Indian passes. All around us, overpowering like singed flesh, the odour of hate which is also the odour of fear. 'Toronto', said the Old One. 'Calcutta Rawalpindi Kuala Lumpur Dares Salaam '. (55-56).

The imagery stated above is very rough, crude and unpleasant. The traditional male world is completely about disgusted mental state. The island, though undiscovered is a world, where there is no men situated, as a result there is no hatred, no domination or fear.

we had known it would be hard to leave this island of women where

On our skin the warm rain fell like pomegranate seeds, where we woke to birdcall and slept to the First Mother's singing, where we swam naked without shame in lakes of blue lotus.

To exchange it for the human world whose harshness we remembered. But this? (57).

It is openly stated that it is an "island of women". Here, the phrase "human world" is ironically contracted out with a supernatural world, but with the "island of women". The exchange for this issue shows that the world is inhabited by both male and female but half of the humanity is actually a male world. The matriarchy home is an island to mistresses also it is significant, it is detached from the conventional male world and the only way to lay the bridge between the two worlds is when the mistresses of their own wish to reach out of the other world. Even when the Mistresses Of Spices involved one among the others in the human world, they still live apart from other human but within their spice bazaars.

when I woke in this land the store was already around me, its hard, protective shell. The spices too surrounded me, a shell of smells and voices. And that other shell, my aged body pressing its wrinkles into me. Shell within shell within shell, and inmost of all my heart beating like a bird ( 133).

The protagonist Tilo is not supposed to leave the store at any cause of time. But the store is situated in the male world a an isolated island, where Tilo create her own home around the male universe. The spice bazaar is filled with spices which are associated with kitchen, the traditional territory over which rule or control is practised. It is clearly revealed to themind that Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni does not leave the feminine domain. She attempts to recreate the female world out of the existing stereotypes.

In the novel Sister Of My Heart, the protagonists Sudha and Anju live in a matriarchal home, in this novel both the male and the female worlds are more symbolic than real.

The sun hangs on the horizon, half hidden by the pipal trees which line our compound walls all the way down the long drive-way to the bolted wrought-iron gates. Our great grandfather had them planted 100 years ago to keep the women of his house safe from the gaze of strangers. Abha Pishi, one of our three mothers has told us this.

Yes we have three mothers – perhaps to make up for the fact that we have no fathers (16).

The girls Anju and Sudha live in a matriarchal home in which there is no male to control them. The only male in the family is disguised as Singhji, who is a driver and no authority is given to him over the household. The originality of the restricted boundary is the women is recreated into a female world just like Tilo in her spice bazaar. But the difference is the rules that regulated by the world are laid by the conventional male world, but only later that the Chatterjee women is completely transformed into a feminine one. The male world always create sufferings, troubles and pains for the women. In Arranged Marriage, marriage tears them apart and Anju moved to America and Sudha to Bengal. Men separate women effectively in terms of customs and traditional ethics, their lives are shattered when they follow the rules of the patriarchal society. Both Anju and Sucha lost their mental steadiness and independence. Later, when they decide to migrate to a female world from the masculine society, they began to find solutions for their problems. Once, Anju is upset by her miscarriage Sudha made a call over the telephone and tells her a story.

Once there was a princess who spent her girlhood in a crumbling marble palace set around with guards. They told her what was proper and what was not, and held up their poison spears before her face if she attempted to stray outside the boundaries they had drawn for her (308-309).

Here, Sudha wants Anju to recover from her depression, so slowly she begins the story, that, there lived a princess in a crumbling marble palace, where all the guards are set around her. It symbolically represents that, in the male conventional world men allocated some space for women in their domain. Then the story continue like, the princess tries to obey the rules of the men and she marries the king who was chosen for her and they told her what was perfect and good also what was not perfect and good for her own life, it shows that men is deciding everything not only to him but to a woman also. They make choices for women's boundaries too. When the princess conceives her man came to know it is a female foetus, so the man decides to destroy the baby, but the princess rebels to protect the female foetus in the womb. And finally, the princess took a strong decision to leave the kingdom to protect the baby and she leaves the palace and reaches the edge of the ocean. Here men do not even want a female baby to have its own space

(matriarchy home) inside its mother's womb; these show men never give space for women in this male universe.

Then, very softly, I hear Anju's voice. 'But suddenly the queen heard someone say, "Don't worry, dear one. Reach for my hand". And looking up she saw a rainbow that extended all the way from the other side of the earth to her. You see in all this turmoil, the queen had forgotten that she had a twin sister who lived in the land across the ocean. The sister was sending her all her love in the form of this rainbow.

Anju's voice falters, but I take up the story. 'The queen held her daughter with one hand and with the other she grasped the rainbow. And her sister pulled her across the ocean, over the gapping jaws of sea monsters to safety' (310).

The female protagonist finds safety when they are apart from the male conventional world. Female world or matriarchy home is different from Tilo's Spice Bazaar, this small space is not their universe it is just privacy or the place to hide them from the patriarchal society. Also female world cannot be create by unique woman they need to attach with one another to create a safe and sound private space for themselves. In both the novels the idea of female attachment is examined very minutely, though there is a greater attention on the theme in the novel *Sister of My Heart*. Attachment varies, like the female attachment is completely contrastive towards the male attachment, where women always create a logical connection to each other unlike the way they connect to men. For instance, in *The Mistress of Spices*, the protagonist Tilo is very much attached towards the Old One and the women who were with her in the island practicing to be mistresses. Tilo feels safe and sound in the island, but once she arrived to America, in her Spice Bazaar she is able to understand the mind set of her customers especially women better than her male customers.

But here is another image. A woman in a kitchen, cooking my rice. She is fragrant as the grains she rolls between her fingers to see if they are done. Rice steam has softened her skin, has loosened hair tied back taut all day. Has gentled the smudges under her eyes. Payday today, so she can begin the frying, mustard seeds sputtering in the pan, brinjal and bitter guard turning yellow-red. Into a curry of cauliflowers like white fists, she mixes garam masala to bring patience and hope. Is she one, is she many, is she not the woman in a hundred Indian homes who is sprinkling, over sweet kheer that has simmered all afternoon, cardamom seeds from my shop for the dreams that keep us from going mad ? (61).

Tilo helps all who come to her Spice Bazaar without any partiality of their sex, especially she can feel the pain what the women feel like Lalitha, Ahuja's wife and Geeta feels in their heart and Tilo take into account of those problems as her own and helps them in solving. Although, she cannot find solutions to the male characters like Raven, Jagjit, Haroun and Geta's grandfather. She helped them but cannot reach them in the sameway. when Tilo talked about the lessons which she learnt on the island, she says:

Most of all we learned to feel without words the sorrows of our sisters, and without words to console them. In this way our lives were not so different from those of the girls we had left behind in our home villages (52).

The mistresses learn the lesson of attachment with the other people by doing everyday household works. When Tilo says, their lifestyle in the island was same as that of the village girls, the association is that women from generation to generation have learnt this kind of attachment with the another by learning the household chores. This is, therefore an indirect method of attachment towards the same indirect method of attachment towards the other world of women, here in the *The Mistress of Spices*, the protagonist Tilo follow the same indirect method of attachment for the other women. Likewise, in the novel *Sister of My Heart*, the emotional tie between the sisters is analyzed, the title itself justify the bond between their relationship. In both the novels Chitra Banerjee used the phrase "sister" to reflect a specific concern about the universal sisterhood. Both Sudha and Anju live in a world of their own wish and they separate themselves from the people around them.

I could never hate Sudha. Because she is my other half. The sister of my heart.

I can tell Sudha everything I feel and not have to explain any of it. She'll look at me with those big unblinking eyes and smile a tiny smile, and I know she understands me perfectly (24).

Right from their childhood Sudha and Anju relate each other in a particular manner i.e., through fairytales, myths and legends. Even after they grown still they continue to communicate through the same elements. Both of their life was surrounded by mythical tales, mythical elements also mythical quality because Anju take Sudha out into the world. It's because Sudha's mother, Nalini, who got high trouble in the labour ward.

Walked all the way across the hall with Anju in her arms and put her face down on my stomach. Anju lay there for a moment, draped over my huge belly... all at once she gave a loud cry, and right then I felt a contraction so strong it was as if my backbone was snapping in two. Next thing I knew, the midwife was handing Sudha to me, saying, "It's another girl". That's why Anju is my twin, don't you see,' Sudha said (29-30).

Not only in Anju and Sudha's life it is more with their fathers, fond of mystery and myth. In one part Pishi told a story to Sudha, it is a story about Sudha's father who lured Anju's father to the rubies cave with a story of his friend who inherited a ruby brought from the rubies cave. Towards the end of the story, Sudha got to know about the two men to the cave. Also, she came to know, the man, who served as a driver for a long time, driver Singhji is the actual father of her. But in the end neither the myths nor the truths of the male world have any use for the girls, they didn't affect the relationship between them in any way. The mythic framework of both these novels contributes to the creation of a female universe. The world of myth is essentially feminine in nature as opposed to the cerebral world which is masculine. In both the novels there is an attempt to create fresh myths or at least give new interpretations to existing ones.

Tilo, the Mistress of Spices changed her name from Tilottamma to Tilo, the sesame seed. She associates herself with giving another name to herself. Tilottamma means the divine danseuse in India's court, so she herself considered the divine and earth are united in Tilo. When she decides to leave the divinity and restrict herself only to human, she fixed another name Maya. In Hindu philosophy, Maya is feminine and is the principle behind the entire material universe, here material universe is known as illusion. Tilo now assumes the name Maya and once again resets her divine and earthly feminine character. In *Sister of my Heart*, Chitra Banerjee rejected the conventional myths and created a new ones. The first story in the novel is titled as "The Princess in the Palace of Snakes", the traditional fairytale of the princess who is waiting eagerly for her charming prince to rescue her from the palace of snakes. But in the second story it is totally different and titled as "The Queen of Swords", it is not a traditional fairytale, where women rescue another women and do not wait for helpless men. This new myth symbolise the new feminine world. This attitude is seen not only in the story that Sudha narrates but also in her actions. During their childhood they enact the role of princess and Anju as prince, who wants to rescue the princess who is in danger. According to Sudha, it is a duty of a man to do all hardwork and rescue her.

'I told her a story'. 'Ah, a story,' nods Pishi. More than any of us, she knows the power stories hold at their centre, like a mango holds its seed. It is a power that dissipates with questioning, so she merely asks, with an odd, wistful look, 'Was it a story I had told you, Sudha?'

I am sorry to disappoint her. 'It's a new story. One I made up, sort of, on the spot'.

'Does it have a name?' asks Gouri Ma.

I start to shake my head. Then it comes to me.

'The Queen Of Swords,' I say (312).

After her marriage to Ramesh life turns to tyranny, she puts up with the ill-treatment for a long time. But still as a conventional princess of the fairytale she waits for her husband to rescue her, she leaves her husband home and returned to her parental home and transformed herself from the "Princess in the Palace" to "The Queen of Swords". Later, she turns down the offers of Ashok to marry her. This rejection of male stereotypical roles is complete. Finally, Sudha's journey to America is really the beginning to a new of women.

Thus, to conclude, Chitra Banerjee have expressed her concern for women in Maitri Organisation which she has established to help battered women and their problems by presenting female protagonists in her novels. The variety of subjects she have touched upon is a great contribution in creating awareness for the modern women all over the globe.

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