



WOMEN IN PROFESSION IN THE WORKS OF BANERJEE AND THILAGAVATHY

Dr.A.Padmashini

Assistant Professor of English, Sri SRNM College, Sattur.

Abstract

Profession is an occupation which requires widespread training along with the study, mastery of specific information, ethical code and procedure of certification. The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization of the texts. These are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures with the newly emerging writers. They try to express myriad voices of those, once considered as subaltern. At the crest of this new literary wake, the South Asian female writers have begun to make their unique mark upon the world of novels. In particular, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Thilagavathy have distinguished themselves among the ground breaking novelists in the genre of South Asian {diasporic} literature. A new socio- economic phenomenon is developed in the society. Women's participation in and out of the home related to economic activities, caused fundamental changes in social, economic and cultural factors in the society. This paper purports to analyze the trials and tribulations of the professional women, expressed by the novelists in their works.

Keywords Used: Submissiveness, Domesticity, Cultural Hostage and Modernity.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a Diasporic English writer who lives in America. Thilagavathy is the first woman IPS officer in Tamilnadu cadre and also renowned writer in Tamil. Both are contemporary feminist writers. The novelists are known for bringing their own auto- biographical experiences and feelings in their works. So, this parallel study provides a common aesthetic identity of two authors of different cultures and regions, which is a part of the comparative study.

Women consider their nature as divine creation in Motherhood and the major role in bringing up their children. On the other hand, women are competent in cultural, political, educational and scientific fields. Thus, women's participation in social and cultural activities is highly important in order to help women themselves, their family and to promote the society in all the aspects. Professionals enjoy a high social status, regard and esteem conferred upon them by the society.

The attribute of the true womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and her society could be divided into four cardinal virtues such as piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.

Domesticity is the most important factor by which all women suffer. Women remained at home as a kind of cultural hostage. They were expected to uphold the values of stability and mobility of the family. The Indian women don't isolate themselves from their own culture which is inbuilt upon them. They continue to consider their family roles as more important than their professional roles.

In patriarchal society, women are continued to accept men as the superior sex. Education, awareness and life's struggles have led women to shed their inhibitions. Great women leaders, artists, scientists and other professional women have inspired other women to overcome social obstacles.

Margaret Thatcher, British politician

said: "In politics if you want anything sad, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman."

Both Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Thilagavathy have presented the plight of Indian middle class women who face conflict of tradition and modernity. They describe how the professional women are being suppressed by the male dominated society in the present world. Divakaruni portrays the professional women in her novels as family centered and submissive.

Thilagavathy points out her characters in a unique way. She depicts the professional women as forward and rational thinkers. All her professional women are pictures against the traditional and customary practices, of the Tamil society. Divakaruni and Thilagavathy are the products of post modern spirit. Their fundamental preoccupation, revealed in their novels, is to create a female universe out of the conventional male world.

In her novel Sister Of My Heart, Anjali and Basudha are shown as professional women. In the sequel novel The Vine Of Desire, Anjali takes up the profession for her beloved sister Sudha, who leaves her husband for protecting the female child in her womb. Anju goes to work without the knowledge of her husband Sunil, who would definitely discourage her in all aspects. Basudha, in the first phase of the novel is shown as the



traditional, orthodox and middle class Indian girl. But in the later half, she emancipates herself as a professional woman due to her pressurized family surroundings, when she is deserted.

Anju's mother Gowrimma is shown as a highly professional woman. When Anju's father has left home, she has to carry the whole family on her shoulders. She successfully runs the book shop and gives bread to the family and gets the two daughters Anju and Sudhamarried. The two fatherless children's desires and their accomplishments are gratified by the professional woman, Gowrimma. Anju is a voracious reader of Virginia Woolf's novels and other books which are suggested by her mother Gowrimma.

Thilagavathy in her novel *NenjilAasai* describes the problem of a professional woman, Syamala. She faces all the troubles which are created by her husband Murali

In a challenging way, Syamala is a school teacher. She respects her profession and treats that as the noblest. Murali loves only her profession for money but not hereafter marriage only she realizes his real intention, and originality. For him, it is quite usual to assault her, without any reason. Finally, she decides to leave from her husband, but the problems follow her where ever she goes.

Her friend and colleague Andal teacher says:

Whoever is in your place would definitely weep that their position has become worse than refuge. You have lost all your belonging: you have lost your house; you have also lost your youth, But you are a progressive thinking woman, Shyamala. You are a wonderful person. [NA 249]

Though Shyamala is ill-treated by her husband and almost lost her peace of mind due to the violent behavior of her husband, she plans and dreams for starting a new model school like Shantiniketan. She is a shining star in her teaching career.

The characters of Banerjee are very close to reality. They try to find a balance between old treasured beliefs and surprising new desires. The heroines in Divakaruni's novels lead an imperfect life which shows how women struggle hard for their personal identity. The sufferings of professional women in silent agony are brought out in most of the works of both the writers. In spite of the suffering, how a woman in India longs to stay with her husband shows the significance of the convention and cultural practice of marriages, which is not easily broken here.

But Thilagavathy presents the professional women as against the tradition and sentiments which are popular in the present contemporary society. They have been kept away from the virtues and customary ways of marriage and family system.

Both Chitra Banerjee and Thilagavathy continue to explore contentious social issues as the failure of family life, singleparenthood, childlessness, loneliness, oldage and death in their works. According to them, a woman's failure in family life makes her a shining and successful professional, from the feministic theory. In her novel *The Vine of Desire*, Chitrabanerjee tries to drift the parallels and charts Sudha's choice of becoming financially self-reliant by accepting the job of a nurse for an old man in America.

Thilagavathy says that women become forward thinkers and professionals due to the effect of democracy and feministic movements in the twentieth century. Women are given the opportunities to learn and get a degree, then they can lead their life after getting predominant posts in various kind of jobs. She speaks and shows more professional women victims in her novels.

When a woman takes the profession from domestic to high level administrative jobs, she has to face a lot of challenges in the men's world. Both writers reveal that in the feministic angle.

The parallel study of the novels of Chitra Banerjee and Thilagavathy is one more attempt in the gradually developing research in English and Tamil literary relations. It also offers a rich and rewarding experience in English-Tamil literary interactions.

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