

Limits of Assimilation: Bewildered Second Generation Immigrant Identity in Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*

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Abstract:

Early childhood is a time of identity formation and exploration. For individuals with an authentic heritage, there is usually only one culture they ascribe to, thus making the identification of cultural values, goals and career aspirations relatively uncomplicated. But for immigrants the search for their identity is an arduous task. Even more difficult for second generation immigrants who find it particularly hard to bring together their cultural and personal values as they search for their identity in the world they are presently part of. Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* is such a novel embedded with the combinations of social concerns, racial intolerance, multiculturalism and mystical realism. This novel explores the problems related to the assimilation of second generation immigrants who think of themselves as part of the territory they currently live in. Chitra Divakaruni takes up the life of Indian immigrants in the USA as the subject matter for her novel and tries to vivify the image of second generation immigrants, who have tried to assimilate the alien culture and have endeavoured to accept the changed identity, overthrowing the Indian cultural heritage in which they took their first breath.

Keywords: Diaspora, Immigration, Assimilation, Cultural identity and Identity Crisis
Introduction

Interest in "question of identity" had dramatically enlarged over the last three decades to such a degree that it became a dominant theme in the contemporary fiction and sociological studies. In general, identity may be defined as the distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual or shared by all members of a particular social category or group. Identity of an individual is not stable and is always in a state of flux because it is fashioned in a society and is solely a product of social construction. Identity is best constructed as being both relational and contextual. As defined:

Rather than being something fixed and universal, identity is a multi-faceted and often contradictory process situationally deployed that must be continuously negotiated and which is ever-changing. (Bonisch-Brednich and Trundle 3-4)

Identity is a discursive product and therefore, holds the possibility to get remade and remodeled in new and innovative ways. Being a part of society the society impacts upon