

Reconstructing a Meaningful Presence in a New Home: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices***Sunal Sharma**Asst. Professor in English
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Women move from village to town, from one country to another for a variety reasons. Sometimes they join a husband who has gone ahead to look for prospects; sometime they go on their own to earn more; sometime they are forced to move because of war, famine, poverty, political or social persecution. Their move may be forceful or voluntary; it is not an easy one. The situation which they have to face after migration is beyond their control. Divakaruni, in her novels, explores the physical and psychological tensions and the tortures to which the immigrant women are subjected. She represents women as actively upholding and shaping class, cultural and gender structures within the community, home and marriage. She has put into words what millions of immigrants would find hard to articulate, especially the dilemma faced by women who move from the confines and traditions of home into the brave new universe outside

The Mistress of Spices deals with one immigrant woman's journey from established paradigms of the past to an uncharted future in America. Divakaruni has presented an excellent perspective of life between and within the two cultures. Divakaruni has woven compelling stories of adversities, defeats and triumphs in the characters who visit Tilo's store and her novel. Some of the stories reflect persistent struggles within Indian diaspora of America like domestic violence, racism, inter-generational discord and the endless effort to absorb and be absorbed in a new environment. The present paper analyses how beneath the sensitive story about an immigrant woman, Divakaruni's shows the exploration of immigrants' loneliness; cultural dislocation; the process of forging new selves and the complex ways in which immigrants negotiate their past.

Key Words: Desire, immigrants, location of culture, binary fixities, assimilation, inter-generational discord, cultural dislocation.

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Oh, East is East, and West is West, and
 never the twain shall meet,
 Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's
 great judgement Seat;
 But there is neither East nor West, Border,
 nor Breed, nor Birth,
 When two strong men stand face to face,
 Tho' they come from the ends of the earth! (Kipling 1-5)

Kipling had rightly observed that even though the two ends of the earth cannot meet, men of each territory can put aside their differences of nationality, race, background, and religion and appreciate each other's universal qualities of bravery, nobility, and rectitude. Yet, Kipling would never have expected that with the technological development in transportation and communication, them westerners and easterners that have quite different cultures would meet so frequently in the international settings.

Divakaruni's first novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), depicts the inner-city social problems in the 1990, including cross-cultural understanding and boundaries, interracial tensions and intergenerational conflicts, immigration of color struggling for acceptance in American society, and the spiritual vacuum in the lives of the California technology-belt "rich Indians" (MS 79) who own chauffeur-driven Rolls Royces and Lamborghinis.

The novel has been made into movie of the same title in 2005, starring Aishwarya Rai and has been directed by Paul Mayeda Berges, with a script by Berges and his wife, Gurinder Chadha. *The Mistress of Spices* deals with an immigrant woman's journey from the established paradigms of the past to an uncharted future in America. In fact much of Divakaruni's work deals with the immigrant experience which is an important theme in the mosaic of post-colonial literary landscape. In order to transcend the matter of form in imparting immigrant's message, she plunges into magical realism, a genre possessed of the power and realism itself. Commenting on Divakaruni's use of magic realism, Usha writes:

Drawing on the special effects of magic realism, postcolonial writers in English are able to express their view of a world fissured, distorted and made incredible by cultural clash and displacement. Like the Latin Americans, they combine the supernatural with the legend and the imagery derived from colonialist cultures to represent societies which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation and political corruption. (142)

Divakaruni by exploring the boundaries of magical realism celebrates Indianness and designs Tilo as a cultural ambassador to bridge the cultural divide separating East and West and also the first and second generation Indian immigrants. The novel presents the dilemma of negotiating one's cultural and biological identity with the drama of alienation and self transformation in the adopted homeland, America. Divakaruni opens her novel with a simple, declarative statement- "I am a Mistress of Spices" (*MS* 3). The protagonist, Tilo is one who runs a spice store at Oakland, California where expatriate and immigrant Indians go not only to buy spices that they need for their 'Pilaos' and 'Kheers' but also for that magic spice that will grant them their desires. The spices are characterized as "holding magic, even the everyday American spices, but the spices of true power are from the mistress' birth land" (*MS* 3).

The history of the protagonist is unique, yet sad. She is born into silence, but can speak. Her birth is described with bitter remembrance. Born as Nayantara, a girl with supernatural abilities to predict and solve the problems of people in a small village in India, she was an unwelcome arrival for her parents: "They named me Nayantara, Star of the eye, but my parents' faces were heavy with fallen hope at another girl-child, and this one color like mud" (*MS* 7). C. N. Eswari brings out the plight of women in a postcolonial patriarchal society:

Women from the postcolonial world face double effacement of race and gender. Their lives are shaped not only by the western hegemonic discourse but also by the patriarchal discourse. Ironically, after independence from imperialism, the gender division in the once colonized nations became more prominent. (214)

To be born a woman in patriarchal society that prefers male heirs to a female one to the extent that a girl child is killed at birth, is a burden in itself but to be born in the shades of brown; a color we as Indians are genetically inclined towards is an added curse. Nayantara grows up unloved and unattended by her parents but duly appreciated as they revel in their daughter's superfluous income arising out of her supernatural powers. This attention only breeds contempt in the girl who longs to free herself from the family that only takes, but never gives. Her urge to escape is realized when in Nayantara's pre-teen years, pirates storm into her home, murder her entire family, raid and pillage the entire village and abduct her, taking her on board their ship as a prisoner to aid them in their plundering. Eventually, Nayantara overthrows the pirate captain to become the pirate "queen leading pirates to fame and glory so that bards sang their fearless exploits" (*MS* 19). She is named Bhagyavati, the bringer of the luck.

Bhagyavati abandons this exalted position when mystical sea serpents tell her about the existence of an island upon which she, and other women like her, can develop their supernatural talents to use them for a greater good. She counters to the call of spices and serves as initial enchantress under the tutelage of the Old One, a grand ancient figure who rules over the island, instructs her maidens, and regulates the influx of new apprentices. After learning the delicate art of the spices, they then have to undergo the baptism by fire in order to transmigrate to the place where they will set up a shelter, a store, from which they will bestow their learned yet magical gift of physical and spiritual healing both through the sale and complimentary distribution of spices. Before their departure, each mistress has to choose a new name symbolic of their new identity in a – New World.

Nayantara chooses the name Tilottama (meaning sesame, a spice known for its nourishment and energizing qualities), leaving her childhood in a village in India behind her, assuming a temporary persona that is of the uncertain present rather than the definitive and historical past. Before leaving, Tilo is given a knife as a gift from First Mother, the purpose of which Tilo believes is "... to cut my moorings from the past, the future. To keep me always rocking at sea" (MS 29). Tilo has entered a space between her past and future and without a precise knowledge of the present. She is unmoored and treading the dark waters between the lands of her past and the land of her future, a theme that will reappear throughout the text's representations of the relationship between time and space.

Tilo, a woman masquerading as an old and bend creature is transported to a land which stands for liberty and freedom of dreams, America, by means of "Shampati's fire", a giant bonfire in which she steps and disappears. She is sent to Oakland, California to a tiny Indian spice shop where she must begin her duties of healing the masses by foretelling disasters and recommending spices. Tilo recreates a little India in her spice store. She says, "I think I do not exaggerate when I say there is no other place in the world quite like this (MS 3). It is like a microcosm in itself where the whole Indian community converges. The store attracts myriad of faces there, for whom the place is reminiscent of home, a little oasis in their diasporic lives full of problems. They come there in search of happiness and in establishing connection with their homeland: "All those voices, Hindi Oriya Assamese Urdu Tamil English, layered one on the other like notes from *tanpura*, all those voices asking for more than their words, asking for happiness except no one seems to know where" (MS 78).

But the problem with the Mistress is that she can easily communicate with Indians but not with the Americans she encounters a situation that becomes a comment on the limitations of the intercultural transactions. She is warned by First Mother that she is allowed to use the magic of spices only for the good of her own people- Indians and "the other, they must go elsewhere for their need" (MS 68).

Divakaruni takes up the image of the spices and the woman as complementary and fuses them in the enigmatic and mysterious character of the mistress of the spices. But here the spices also represent the heritage of tradition that forms, and restrains the mistress. If the logical and rational aspect of spices possessing magical powers is kept aside, it can be argued that the spices at a symbolic level represent something which is un-American. They succeed in recapturing the Orient in the minds of those who are enamored by them. It represents a different life style and way of thinking which most of the customers believe they have consciously left behind but whose invisible and unbreakable bonds persist even now though at an unconscious level. In this context, John Walsh in *The Spice Trade* remarks:

For hundreds and indeed thousands of years, intrepid sailors and merchants have braved the seemingly endless seas to find the mysterious islands where spices could be found, Mace nutmeg and cloves ... for the Romans and for the Europeans of the Dark Ages and Mediaeval era, they were almost magical particles from unbelievably remote locations. (47)

The colonial East was rendered in the terms of the feminine that had to be mastered and governed by the superior, masculine west. 'She' was the exotica; a land of ardent poetry and aquamarine feathers; sensuous and wild just like the, treasure she hid in her bosom: the spices. These all phrases sum up all the magic of the East, the exotic land viewed by the western eyes. Therefore, in continuum with the title, each chapter is named after a spice and discusses the trials and tribulations of an individual and the special attributes of the spices:

Each spice has day special to it ... color of day break and conchshell sound. Turmeric, the preserver, keeping foods safe in a land of ... heat and hunger. Turmeric the auspicious spice, placed on the ... over coconuts at Pujas, rubbed into borders of wedding sarees. (MS 13)

Furthermore spices are composite of eastern and western cultures as they range from very western vanilla beans to utterly Indian Turmeric or *Halud*. Thus, the reader gets a glimpse into the range of problems that surround the life of the diasporic Indian. The first customer introduced to the readers is Ahuja's wife. "An attractive yet downtrodden creature bound to the home through an arranged marriage to a much older, domineering Indian Husband" (MS 14). Ahuja's wife has of course a name, Lalita, "La-li-ta, three liquid syllables perfect – suited to her soft beauty" (MS 14). But, she thinks of herself only as a wife. Fascinated by the glamour of wealth and America, she casts aside her dreams of settings up her own tailor's shop in India, follows her husband to an alien land where she has no support, no friend or job and places herself in her husband's power so completely that she is regularly beaten, bruised and raped night after night by her own husband. "All day at home, she is so lonely. The silence like quick sand sucking at her wrists and ankles, tears she cannot stop, disobedience tears spilled pomegranate seeds and Ahuja shouting when he returned home to her swollen eyes" (MS 15).

Mrs. Ahuja serves as a good example of how Divakaruni blends reality with mysticism. Tilo thinks at first that this abused wife will be saved if she gives her freshly ground turmeric because it is a "shield for heart's sorrow, anointment for death, hope for rebirth" (MS 14). She thinks of the wife as "O Lalita who is yet not Lalita" (MS 16) as one who has not yet come into her own, who is raped nightly by her husband to the serenade of "bitch. Fucking you is like fucking a corpse" (MS 107). In a moment of hurried panic, Tilo gives Mrs. Ahuja a tightly wrapped packet of fennel that will give her the "mental strength for what must be done" (MS 109) together with a copy of *Indian Currents* magazine. We learn later that the magazine lists the phone number of a shelter for the abused women. At the end of the novel, "Lalita" writes Tilo that she did indeed call the number from the magazine, did get the courage to walk out of a horrific marriage, because "I tell myself, I deserve dignity, I deserve happiness" (MS 289). This destabilizes the reader's expectations of the power of mysticism while also fulfilling the reader's sense of the predictability of realism at work. Whether turmeric or fennel had the power that Tilo speaks of is left to the reader's imagination because the magazine, slipped inadvertently, seems to have been equally effective.

The chapter 'Asfoetida' presents another Indian woman, Daksha– a workhorse in the family hierarchy of an ageing mother-in-law and a husband who will not help her around the house because "... after all isn't the kitchen the women's place" (MS 80). She works as a nurse at an AIDS ward "to whom no one listens so she had forgotten how to say" (MS 80). When she comes home she has to cook in the Indian way and looks after her husband and mother-in-law. It becomes onerous for Daksha to perform these double duties. She wants to tell her family that she is unable to work at home but she can't. Tilo gives her spices which will help her to say 'No', "Daksha, here is the seed of black pepper to be boiled whole and drunk to loosen your throat so you can learn to say No, that word so hard for Indian women. *No* and *hear me now*" (MS 81, original emphasis). Tilo also advises her *Amla* for developing immunity to endure everlasting pain.

Divakaruni in her work deals with women of all races, religion, culture and faith who share common female experience. All her heroines walk the tight rope between their dual roles of being a preserver and carrier of their culture and their new emerging identity in an alien land. She also explains the traditional expectations of Indian women in their native culture as a daughter, a wife, a good daughter-in-law and a good mother.

Another tale of oppression deals with Geeta, a second generation immigrant. She is the only daughter of her parents, their pride and love but the moment she voices her individuality, her family falls apart and she has to leave home. This account of rebellion and exclusion is not related from the point of view of the oppressed female but from the clash between tradition and modernity:

Modernity and tradition are oppositional poles according to many postcolonial critics and theorists who not only systematically and systemically deconstruct this divide but also lament the gap between the west and peoples from developing nations. (Rajan 22)

Geeta's family becomes a battle-field where modernity clashes with tradition, where Indian culture of Geeta's grandfather clashes with the American culture of Geeta and where theory clashes with practice. American culture becomes the basis for interactions outside the home. At home, the first generation immigrants attempt to preserve their cultural and religious heritage and expect to live according to the Indian cultural values. Geeta is continuously reproached by her grandfather for her allegedly free behavior with men; working with them till late in the evening, being brought home by them, using too much make up and buying expensive cars with the money she should save for her dowry. He says:

May be ok for all these *firingi* women in this country, but you tell me yourself *didi* if a young girl should work – late – late in the office with other men and come home only after dark and sometimes in their car too? *Chee, Chee*, back in Jamshedpur they would have smeared dung on our faces for that. And who would even marry her. *MS 88*)

The conflict comes to a head when Geeta's parents try to arrange a match for her in India and Geeta announces rebelliously that she loves Juan, a Chicano and wants to marry him only. Her decision shatters the entire family. According to her parents Juan is even more of an outcast because he is not white. Geeta is not prepared for this volte-face and is shocked by the elements of racism that she perceives in her parents reaction to Juan. They feel that she does not respect their culture while Geeta feels they have no interest in respecting hers. In disagreement with her parents she leaves home to live with Juan, her choice of a partner not from her community, but a white man, a Chicano. She breaks the traditional links that bind her to her community and her family. According to her community, her action is considered as a dishonor to the family.

Incidents similar to this particular incident are not uncommon and have often led to violence and murder. Salman Rushdie cites such an incident as one of the inspirations for his novel *Shame*, wherein the father kills his daughter in the name of honour. But in case of Geeta's family, conflict is only resolved with Tilo. Like a medicine woman, Tilo steps in and performs her miracle with her spices so that the "Thorn of hate" is plucked out from the heart of Geeta's grandfather. Thus, Divakaruni through the character of Geeta has created new order or new city which is to be inhabited by the offspring born out of hybrid union, as represented by Geeta and her Mexican fiancé, Juan. Moreover, Geeta herself nevertheless,

cannot be identified as just India any more “Geeta whose name means sweet song ... Geeta who is India and America all mixed together into a new melody” (MS 87).

The same dilemma of trapezing between the values of first generation immigrants and second generation immigrants is faced by Jagjit, a turbaned sikh teenager who comes home every day from America to a house steeped in Punjab and soon seeks refuge with gangs. The first generation parents try their best to preserve the Indian identity in their children sometimes resulting in further confusion among the next generation. Jaggi, the turbaned Sikh symbolizes the trauma the Indian children undergo growing up in a foreign land.

Equally poignant is the story of Mohan, one of Tilo’s working class patrons who is brutally assaulted and viciously beaten by two young white men calling him “Sonofabitch Indian, Shoulda stayed in your own goddam country” (MS 170). Tilo experiences Mohan’s and Veena’s suffering as she says, “My limbs ache as after a long illness my sari is damp with shiver sweat, and in my heart cannot tell where your pain ends and mine begins for your story is the story of all those I have learned to love in this country and too fear for” (MS 172). But Mohan and Veena get dejected and leave for India because nothing is left for them in America now.

On the other hand, Tilo provides Jaggi with cinnamon, a spice known as friends maker but it never stops him from ruining. He has turned into a drug trafficker and is waiting to turn fourteen when he will get his coveted gift: “cold and black, shinning and heavy with power in (his) hand, pulsing electric as life as death, (his) passport into real America” (MS 121). Tilo is shocked and wants to try some other spices so that she will get her innocent Jaggi back. But Jaggi refuses: “Shit I don’t need no smelly Indian tonic” Tilo never understand the reason behind the drastic change in Jagjit. She tries to analyze: “And I left alone to walk stuffy back to the country in lower way aching head into my hands, to wonder in dismay what went wrong. To ask myself over and over, was it him? Was it his parent or was it America?” (MS 22). Frantz Fanon describes this predicament of natives in his book *Black Skins, White Masks*, He says, “Native puts on white marks in a desire to set himself up the setter’s place. However the native never dreams of becoming the settler but only substituting himself for the settler” (qtd in Nayar 173). The novel shows some immigrants create their own space in America some assimilates and prospers economically and some lose their jobs or worse, their children.

All the characters portrayed in this novel try to negotiate with new cultural boundaries. Each is caught up in a web and is helped to come out by Tilo and her spices. Tilo give Manu, “a senior at Ridgefield high” (MS 79), “a slab of sesame and a candy made with sweet molasses, gur to slow you down just enough to hear the frightened love in your father voice losing you to America” (MS 80), when he is not allowed to attend the school.

Another South Asian patron of Tilo is Haroun, a Kashmiri who works as a driver. Tilo unravels the American dream by reading his palm: “it looks good very good. Great things will happen to you in this new land, this America. Riches and happiness and may be even love, a beautiful woman and dark lotus flower eyes” (MS 28). She suggests *kalojire*, spice of the dark planet key, protector against the evil eye for Haroun to cover over what fate has written for him. However it becomes quite gripping and full of tension when Haroun is mugged by some robbers at night and he creeps back to his home more like a wounded creature about to die. He is nursed back to health by his neighbors and Tilo. She administers the lotus root that would make Haroun and Hameeda, the widow, love each other and marry.

His luck seems to take an upward turn, however full of obstacles his path may have been at the beginning.

One of her most convincing characters is Rahman, a surgeon from a Pakistani army hospital, who could not re quality in America and so runs a gas station, moonlighting on the side as a medical man for immigrants who won't go to the American doctors. As Fanon points out in *A Dying Colonialism*, "the native cannot talk to the western doctor accepting the (western man's) medicine is demonstrating confidence in western technique/ science, swallowing it in one gulp is literally getting even with it" (qtd in Nayar 173).

The circumstances become more nerve racking when the mistress falls in love with an attractive male client. Raven; who is himself tormented by his half native and half American identity and whom she calls, "My American". As their romance prospers, Tilo finds the past inescapable, for the thoughts of the First Mother constantly plague her present consciousness. Tilo often dreams of the island and even engages in a silent mental dialogue with the First Mother across the expanses of space and time. She is weighed down by the insider/outsider dichotomy which is a part and parcel of an Indian woman's life:

The conflict that she must resolve between her red, youthful inner self which reaches out to the world and life outside and her outer aged powerful self, which keeps her within strictly imposed limits, are the reworking of the very same conflict that all exiles experience between past and future and the here and there. (Mcloed 70)

There is a sense of simultaneous universes or different spheres that exists at the same time and in the same place. As Tilo thinks, "First Mother, are you at this very moment singing the song of welcome, the song to help my soul through the layers, bone and steel and forbidding word which separates the two worlds" (*MS* 32). The phrase at this very moment suggests the absence of divide between the island and the America that would relegate the island to the past and America to the present. Her past and present are intermixed in such a way that her past is the past of her present and her present does not exist by itself. Sometimes she wonders if "there is such a thing as really as an objective and untouched nature of being or if all that we encounter has already been changed by what we had imagined it to be. If we had dreamed it into being" (*MS* 16).

The whole notion of "home" becomes displaced, for Tilo who jumps from one temporal location to another with almost every chapter. Tilo does not have home in the traditional and permanent sense, for America is only a temporary place for her. Tilo has left the island but knows that she will someday return to it, to that place that is still in-between the two worlds, yet remains the only location in which she feels the comfort of belongingness. Tilo's emotions are an extreme version of the diasporas experience of space in which continents are separated not by miles but by universes, "where home does not exist except in the space of 'migrant's' mobilization of his/her memory" (Rushdie 195).

As the novel progresses Tilo starts getting enamored by Raven, a moniker who hides from Tilo his real identity for fear of rejection based on ethnicity. Tilo is unable to read or solve his problem as he arouses in her the forbidden desire of love. Tilo chafes under the spices strictures that she become overly involved in her customers lives; that she never leave her store and venture out into the streets of Oakland; that she refrains from using her power for their own benefit; and, most important, that she never pursue love- in short that she must live for others, not for herself. Despite of these rules, she is overcome by her attraction to

Raven and yields to her wishes rather than those of spices. He is the only person in America to whom Tilo reveals her true name.

Raven is also drawn towards the oriental, antique and enigmatic appearance of Tilo. He finds his affair with her as intriguing as his own past which he confides in a moment of joy coquetry when asked by Tilo not to taste the dish for it is too hot for a white man's mouth. Raven says, "So you think I am white"(MS 151). Tilo becomes perplexed by the statement because he does appear white to her. Raven noticing the confusion relates the tale of how he like Tilo once believed himself to be Caucasian, but through a suprising turn of events he discovered his actual identity. Raven expects love from Tilo who is an Indian mistress of spices. He tells everything to Tilo as he thinks that his burden will be reduced. To save him from identity crisis and cultural oppression, Tilo suggests him some spices to revive his interest in life.

Divakaruni through the love affair of Tilo and Raven wants to project the complexities of race in South Asian identity that has adopted the form of orientalist fantasies. Raven, Tilo's male counterpart sees her "as a paradigmatic representation of Eastern beauty, an authentic real Indian" (Tiwari 92) and since Tilo is unaware of her own identity, she sees herself as Raven's orientation fantasy, "a hyper-sexualized and representative of all that is seen as Indian in American culture" (MS 272-3).

In his relationship with Tilo Raven falls prey to describing and categorizing her based upon his knowledge of her race but without a true understanding of her actual identity. Raven thus becomes the quintessential orientalist and his tendency towards an orientalist perspective is apparent in the exchange of views that ensues when a group of beautiful young Indian women, whom Tilo terms the 'Bougainvillea girls,' enter the spice store one day. Raven believes that Tilo possesses an airy 'essence that makes her an authentic' Indian as compared to the other young Indian women in the store. In fact he concocts the western notion of what India is. He accords inherent characteristic to the authenticity that are prerequisite for true Indian identity, Tilo questions Raven's conferring of authenticity.

Tilo's body is transformed from that of ugly old woman into the beautiful body like the celestial damsels or 'Apsara' and she spends an evening in a blissful union both sexual and spiritual with Raven. She expresses her happiness in the words, "I move as through deep water, I who have waited all my life – though I see it only now- for this brief moment blossoming like fireworks in a midnight sky. My whole body trembles, desire and fear ..." (MS 280). Moreover, in shaping Tilo, Divakaruni seems to be influenced by the mythological tale of *Yajati*. The *Yajati* syndrome is said to exist when there lies a wish, amounting to a yearning, for youthfulness when one is on the verge of losing it or has already lost it. Realizing the loss of her youth on meeting Raven and the Bougainvillea girls, Tilo undergoes an acute sense of despair and yearns to become youthful by using the spices personally. It is inherent in the human nature, perhaps a biological fact that the sensual things and worldly joy attract. Tilo also gets attracted by the worldly desire of being youthful but her happiness is soon diminished for she has a dream in which the First Mother tells her that she only has three more days in America and on the third day she will have to enter once again into *Shampati's* fire and return to the island. Disturbed by this she leaves a note for Raven telling him:

I do not expect you to understand. Only to believe that I had no choice. I thank you for all you have given me. I hope I have given you a little too. Our love would never have lasted, for it was based upon fantasy, yours and mine, of what it is to be Indian.

To be American. But where I am going - life or death, I do not know which - I will carry its brief ching sweetness. Forever. (MS 292)

Yet when the moment arrives for the fire to consume her, she loses consciousness. After gaining consciousness, she finds the entire Oakland destroyed by a huge earthquake and Raven taking her for the search of an earthly paradise in his car. She changes her mind to return to Oakland and help people over there. She thinks that it is because of her that everything happened and she wants to help people as she did before. She tells Raven. "Don't you see why it would never work? Each of us loving not the other but the exotic image of the other that we have fashioned out of our own lack...." to which Raven concedes, "okay, may be my ideas about you and your people were wrong [...] let's teach each other what we need to know. I promise to listen. And you - I know you're good at listening already (MS 311). Raven changes his mind and returns with Maya, the new name given to Tilo by him to lead a new life.

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni succeeds in presenting the new identity of the immigrant who validates her cultural identity to reconstruct a meaningful presence in the new world. Thus, the novel ends not with the celebration or imitation but with the creation of a new identity and a new home. In Tilo, we see a hybrid identity, that is, the fusion of oriental values with occidental ethos that transforms her from being an outsider to being a citizen of the host country and finally to being a world citizen. Tilo seems to be saying. "We are tossed by the winds of fate; once we end where they blow us we make of ourselves what we will" (Rajan 234). Tilo's end statement that she belongs both to India and America, strongly suggests that she is no longer an immigrant but has negotiated her space by integrating into the new homeland, America.

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