

**Adversity Metamorphosed into Human Relationship in
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing***

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Humanistic, humanism and humanist are the terms of psychological perspective relating to an approach which studies the whole person, and the uniqueness of each individual. Humanistic psychologists look at human behavior from the eyes of the observer to the eyes of the behaving. Humanistic psychology says the individuals have a comfortable feel to determine their own behaviors and goals.

One of the most remarkable writers of the Indian Diaspora, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni looks into the eyes of her characters to evaluate the struggles and values of human relationship in the phase of adversity. Adversities include exposure to interpersonal violence, the trauma of war, death of a loved one, natural disasters, serious industrial and terrorism. Some adversities are ongoing such as the stress of exposure to bullying, harassing work- place environments, dysfunctional or challenging relationships, the grinding stress of poverty, and the impact of environmental stressors such as extreme weather conditions and global warming. When adversity

is intense, uncontrollable and overwhelming, it can give rise to depression. Depression causes anxiety. Anxiety causes a person to be self-centered psychosomatic and it makes them to be fury on others for their inability.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shows the difficult relationship of multi-culture people's trauma and adversity in her novel *One Amazing Thing*. People of different religion, nationality, race and gender meet together which bring a hope for their adversity to renew life aftermath disaster. Even at the adversity how these people have engulfed to redeem their conflicts and bound together to be a good human relationship is stated clearly.

One Amazing Thing is a passionate creation about survival of good relationship. It gives reasons to survive. Survival brings self-centered. The survival brings enmity, hatred and also superior feel towards each other. *One Amazing Thing* speaks of nine individual survivors who have visited Indian consulate office to go to India to redeem their various adverse situations. All nine of them have stuck into massive earth quake collapsed building. There would be calm after deluge or natural calamity likewise it brings grace under pressure. The grace feel comes only when each tells of one amazing thing which has happened in their life. They get emotional salvation by heeding each other's enduring pain. The salvation is not for their coming out of the debris to save their life alone, but to purge the inner self. The adversity they experienced emotionally crippled them until they no longer feel, as they could bear no more pain.

The nine survivors are: an African-American ex-soldier named Cameron who is searching for redemption, an Indian-American college student Uma who is troubled by a

question about love and her parents' sudden divorce plan, an old Chinese woman Jiang with a secret past love with an Indian man and sudden move to America due to Sino-Indian War and her goth granddaughter Lily, a white elderly upper-class Caucasian couple Mr. and Mrs. Pritchett whose relationship is disintegrating and forlorn, a young Indian-American Muslim man Tariq who is struggling with the fallout of 9/11 and a racial hatred, south Indian visa officer Malathi and her boss Mangalam who both have troublesome past life with their family, they are on the verge of an adulterous affair in the vicinity of the passport office, Malathi who escapes from her marriage and works at parlor punishes her treacherous and finicky customer who is rich and arrogant enough in ill-treating her servant maid so in an array to escape from malice Ms. Lola asks her to move to USA for some time to get rid of her rich customers rage till she earns for herself to own a parlor, Mangalam who is under the aggravation of rich dominating wife and his father-in-law for troubling his secret relationship with his colleague Latika so he takes the decision to migrate to US to work without the hullabaloo of his wife- all get stuck in visa office because of a huge earthquake. These nine individual people represent multiculturalism which shows of their enough traumas and adversities. Uma thought, "It was like a mini UN summit in here."(4).

The adversity shows in *One Amazing Thing* is the struggle of nine survivors to redeem their guilt, familial problems, disintegrating love. It shows of how this calamity makes disputes in every character. Divakaruni compares this dispute with Golding's *Lord of Flies*. In *Lord of Flies*, characters are of children between 6 and 12 marooned in an isolated island in an air crash during war evacuation. They are divided into groups with separate responsibilities; to search for

food and to keep the signal fire burning for survival. They dispute with each other and it converts them into savages. Whereas Divakaruni keeps her characters alive till the end. Though they have dispute they reconcile and keep calm for each other's act. Their heed to everyone's one amazing thing in their life help them to redemption. When Mangalam hit Malathi everyone comes for her rescue and cause more dispute between almost all the characters till it have been stopped by Cameron: "His hand, moving faster than his brain, swung out and caught her on the side of the face. He felt the flesh give under the impact. She cried out sharply and raised her arm, belatedly, to shield herself. He moved toward her to inspect the damage, queasiness and guilt churning inside him, and as he did so, like echoes, he heard two other cries" (63).

Divakaruni compares her characters dispute to *Lord of Flies* when her characters have almost become oblivion of their devastation. "Tariq's eyes were crazed. He butted Cameron hard with his head and Cameron reeled back, gasping. It was like their very own *Lord of Flies*" (67). The author gives renowned description of how the adversity of inner conflicts have redeemed through the natural force into these nine selected people. The natural calamity gives them space to share their one amazing thing to each other to maintain a good relationship. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has kept a solution to purge the enmity in them where in *Lord of Flies* only savage activity takes place. "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (Golding 66).

The nine survivors are given solution to their psychological problems by sharing their untold and hidden feelings to all. The sharing gives them support to repent it to their conscience and regains strength to grow good humanity. The adversity which they face at present is not for

gaining worldly pleasure. They have even become oblivion of their past happenings. For getting rid of their personal conflicts, they have come to Indian consulate to visit India for individual reasons. All nine stuck with major earth quake, they think their personal conflicts are not so big for the present deadly happenings. So each one of them have agreed to one of the nine survivors Uma's temporary remedial of telling stories which might ease them temporarily or it would give them space to learn of their partners , family members and their hidden unsolvable problems.

She admires her characters solving their utmost adversity by sharing of what they have. The stories each one tells range from childhood abuse, strained marriage and loss, loneliness to unrequited love, giving each character a chance to revive that one amazing quality; to bury the past happenings, forget selfishness and inner violence and become compassionate. Even if they are not saved by the rescuers they would die happily for the sharing of untold amazing stories which have made them to be good human relationship in the end. These nine people are trying to escape from the huge debris fallen. Similarly they are trying to find the ways to solve their unsolvable problems. Divakaruni helps her characters to fulfill basic amenities without the savage activity like the characters in *Lord of Flies*. The only person Cameron helps everybody to share the little food of what they have and treats those who are hurt in the collapse. Cameron, a veteran, is remorse for his past infidelity to his girl whom he dislikes. Through Cameron Divakaruni resolves her characters basic needs and helps everybody to survive till the end. Initially everybody thinks of their self rescue alone they never tend to think of others. Tariq suffers from 9/11 incident opposes Cameron because of his African American identity. Tariq did not like Cameron to lead all nine of them. He opposes everybody till he has been saved by

Mangalam even little girl Lily considers Tariq as her brother helped to pull him out from the debris. Malathi has an aversion towards Mangalam for his unkind relationship and his secret alcohol bottles to drink during office hours which she has found only when she enters into Mangalam's private bathroom where the other rooms of the buildings have been collapsed completely.

At last the nine survivors have heard of the sounds which come from above. The sound might be a rescue team or it collapses even worse to a level of killing everyone. They are experiencing death to the utmost conclusion. The fear of death makes them to reconcile with each other and finds a moral support. Thus, through the hardships of nature, it has made human to understand the value of life and relationship. Divakaruni has been proved to be perfect linker of multiculturalism and post modern writer. She herself has faced hardships after immigrating to America likewise she has tested her characters whether they survive hard or live a renewed life. She leaves the conclusion to the minds of readers to decide whether to unite nine individual people to redeem their follies or unrequited love or they would die to witness the adversity which turns them to be good. Adversity seems to be good to countenance by all human to purge themselves from their follies. Adversities of complex conflicts fall down when they have been met with an adversity of life-threatening conflict. The conclusion of the novel actually renews their life to have strength to face whatever hardship comes. The characters not only survive but also they regain their spirit to achieve whatever they tend to face. Divakaruni proves the quote of Bacon has quoted the speech of Seneca "that the good things which belong to prosperity are to

be wished; but the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired” (Of Adversity 2). She shows her characters unity though the adversity merges them into nearly collapsed state.

Divakaruni has proved the values of relationship in her novel *One Amazing Thing*. She has pacified all her nine survivors’ basic needs by sharing food and shelter under one little almost collapsed roof. She has contented on the theory of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. She has satisfied her characters dispute earlier by sharing little food in them to survive. Later, the conflicts of various problems of their personal seem to be resolved psychologically once they are satisfied with their basic needs. Once the difficult of hungry survival have fed with food, they resolve to share their thoughts for their hopeless redemptive survival. Divakaruni can be admired for her humanistic value which has been imposed on her characters throughout the end of the disaster. Humanism maintains them to be valuable and it makes them consolable for their violent act or makes more meaningful for their irreparable life. Her characters have understood that it is extraneous in struggling with their inner revolutionary conscious rather they have resolved to face reality. They would face reality with better humanistic approach after they would have been rescued. At present all nine survivors expect for their redemption to happen possibly to see their life struggle in the different phase. The only solution to come over from their conflicts is to be better humanistic in the thoughts and to understand of their familial relationship.

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