

# Longing and Belonging in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Vine of the Desire"

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## Abstract

**Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** holds an honorable place in Indian Literature. Her novel "*The Vine of the Desire*" is sequel to the novel "*The Sister of My Heart*". The novel continues the story of the two beloved sisters in a foreign land. The triangle plot spins around the three major characters Sudha, Anju and Sunil. Anju invites Sudha, a single mother to be with her and to give her sister a better life. Sunil, Anju's husband falls in love with Sudha while she comes to California to console Anju, who lost her unborn son Prem. This paper explores the longing and belonging in the novel "The Vine of the Desire" with the essence of friendship, renounce, love, integration and self discovery.

**Keywords:** Honorable, sequel, beloved, console, explores, longing and belonging

## Introduction:

**Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** is one of the foremost voices of diaspora in Indian Writing in English. Her women characters are designed in a way that they depict the lives of immigrant in the foreign land. The desire, expectation, struggle, survival and yearning for the home land are wonderfully depicted in the novels of **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**. Her characters survive during the struggle, succeed the sorrow and rule in the midst of bewilderment, they are the masters of their fate and captains of the lives' ship. Though they have lots of regrets and disappointments they try to spread the joy of caring the people around them. This paper explores the longing and belonging in the novel "The Vine of the Desire".

The novel revolves around the emotional bond between the sisters Sudha and Anju. It also unwraps the longing for home and sense of belonging. This novel is more a triangle story the plot moves around Sudha, Anju and Sunil, who is Anju's husband.

"*The Vine of the Desire*" is sequel to the novel "*The Sister of My Heart*". The novel continues the story of the two beloved sisters in a foreign land. The darling sisters become stranger in "*The Vine of the Desire*" and then unite at the end of the novel. When the novel begins the sisters are not in Calcutta, they move from the city of their childhood to California. After marriage Anju moved to California with Sunil. "*The Vine of the Desire*" begins with the ill-fated death of Anju's son Prem and it records the despair and dissatisfaction of Anju and Sunil. As Anju is at home, she feels lonely and lost than Sunil. Meanwhile, Sudha gets divorced and starts her life with Dayita in her mother's house. Sudha too is mentally distressed because her future with Dayita is so uncertain.

Sudha's longing to be loved is very strikingly portrayed by the author. Sudha accepted the marriage with Ramesh for the betterment of Anju's life. Sudha, the sacrificial girl always stands for her loved ones and especially for Anju, who is her soul mate. Sudha from her childhood she takes care of the household work and all the responsibilities. After her marriage, she volunteered herself to be a good daughter-in-law and a loving wife. Though she did everything for her husband and in-laws they didn't treat her well and ready to accept her girl baby. Despite her good nature, she was not accepted by her husband and in-laws. Sudha is a strong individual though she has a longing for love she spreads the same love and care for the people around her. It needs lots of strength to move with nothing. Sudha is one such personality who strives hard and flies high in spirit when none at her side. Sudha is a hope for many women to move on in life to show that nothing can stop them from living a purposeful life.

Anju after the death of her unborn son 'Prem' Anju wants Sudha to be with her in California. The longing of the sisters for each other is skillfully envisioned in this novel. Anju is desperate to be with Sudha and Sudha too wishes to be with Anju, they both long for each other. Sunil comes to know about Sudha's arrival and he warns Anju not to keep her close to them as it may cause separation between them. Though Sudha knows about Sunil's interest on her she comes to California for Anju. This triangle plot is evident of the characters' longing and belonging. The longing and belonging doesn't stop with the love and emotions it also extends to the borders of the nativity.

Sudha comes to California, the moment she reaches California she starts shouldering Anju's responsibility at home. Sudha starts doing all the domestic work and gives rest to Anju. Sudha motivates Anju to continue her studies. Meanwhile, Sunil spends a lot of time with Dayita and little girl could fill the void in his heart. It's more like 'daughter finds a father and father finds a daughter', Sunil shares all his childhood memories with Dayita and loves her so much. Sunil's crush for Sudha now turns to be love. Sunil longs for Sudha, seeing her doing all the household chores and the broken married life not only makes Sunil sympathies Sudha but he goes to an extent of having affair and proposes her.

Though the sisters love each other unreservedly and shares all the joys and sorrow together there are things that they can't share. Sunil is Anju's husband he can't be shared, our culture calls it immoral. When Sudha realizes that she shouldn't rob her sister's husband and she walks out leaving a letter though things went beyond the limitations. Sudha was concerned about Anju and she wanted Anju to live good life with Sunil.

Sudha is so sacrificial in nature. Sudha from her childhood she stood for Anju. She thought that her father is the reason for Anju father's death and this made Sudha sacrifice everything for Anju. In '*Sister of My Heart*', Sudha refused to elope with Ashok and accepted to marry Ramesh to save Anju's life and not to ruin Anju's marriage. Sudha scarified her love life for Anju but in the course of time her dejection over the divorce and Sunil's care towards Dayita, brought Sudha closer to Sunil. Though she felt the belonging safe and secured with Sunil, her conscience warned her that it's an injustice that she is doing for her beloved sister Anju. So Sudha walks out and accepts the job of taking care of the old man. In the new job she takes, she feels herself as an independent woman. Though the job is so tough in dealing with the old man, Sudha takes care of the old man as her father and convinces him that if he takes food properly and gets better she would take him back to India. Sudha is always selfless and sacrificial even in her longing state she could care out of the way and make others happy. Mr. Sen, the old man too is longing to go back to his home town and he couldn't feel California as belonging. He is convinced by Sudha's verdict and finally at the end of the novel Sudha accompanies the old man and flies back to India.

Anju, the modest character in the novel brings Sudha to California to give her a better life but before her arrival she comes to know her husband's secret crush for Sudha. Anju is already in depression over the loss of his unborn son and Sunil's decision of marrying Sudha after the divorce, breaks her heart. Anju with all pain walks out of Sunil's house and starts a new life with her friends. When Sunil comes forward to support her financially she neglects and earns money out of writing assignments and articles. Anju too is strong enough to handle life on her own.

Sudha meets Anju and informs her that she is going back to India. Despite the fact that Anju was angry on Sudha for abandoning her, she becomes calm when she meets Sudha face to face. The relationship between the sisters blooms once again with the same fragrance. The longing of the sisters for each other is fulfilled and they once again cherish and share their love.

#### **Resources and Methods:**

The main resource is the novel "*The Vine of the Desire*". Referred the diaspora theory to have better understanding on '**Longing and Belonging**' in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "*The Vine of the Desire*", and how it has dealt with the emotions of the characters. The author has dealt with different dimensions of longing and belonging in this novel.

#### **Findings and Interpretations:**

In this novel, Sudha is longing for love and security which she could find in Sunil. Sunil who lost his unborn son Prem is consoled by the presence of Dayita. Dayita, the little girl's longing for the father is well understood and Sunil plays the role. Anju, wife of Sunil who is not solace by the death of her unborn son is consoled by Sudha. Anju's longing for a son still continues and she loses Sunil's attention and love at this point. Anju too neglects to take care of Sunil. Their relationship becomes strained. Sunil is Anju's belonging, whereas the poor girl's is not able to hold him for the rest of her life. Though she knows the crush of Sunil on Sudha she wants to help Sudha out of the way but things goes out of her control and it ruins her marital life. The most deserved Anju, becomes dejected and get divorced after knowing Sunil's love for Sudha. Anju, the most respectful by all means denies the financial support of Sunil and lives an independent life. The triangle plot deals with attraction, betrayal, sacrifice, longing for love and family and the plot carries the affinity of the homeland and sisterhood.

**Conclusion:**

'*The Vine of the Desire*' spins around three major characters, Sudha, Anju and Sunil. At the end, Sudha and Anju's friendship is rekindled and their longing for love is satisfied with better understanding. They forgive without a confession and move on holding each other in heart. For the sisters holding each other and sharing love is more like a sailor who finds a port in the storm. Sudha finds her belonging in India, her homeland. Whereas Sunil searches for Sudha and Dayita everywhere. He longs for the daughterly love. The reason for the affinity towards Sudha is Dayita. Sunil's longing becomes futile. Sunil wishes to be Anju's friend after divorce that too becomes unsuccessful. So the longing never ends for Sunil.

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