



Cross Cultural Conflicts in Kavita Daswani's *Everything Happens for a Reason*

Ashwin Tirgar

Assistant Professor

Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Sami

Abstract

The present paper focuses on cross cultural conflicts in Indian immigrants in America, the socio-cultural condition of the characters and pluralism of societies. Alienation, transformation, assimilation and identity crisis and formation are the major issues.

Key words: cross culture, multiculturalism, transformation, integration.

Kavita Daswani, an Indian Diaspora writer, is born in Hong Kong, to Indian emigrant parents. Her novel *Everything Happens for a Reason* is the great novel about the fashion world of America's Hollywood and a struggle of Indian woman with traditional Indian culture along with desire and identity in cross cultural atmosphere. The term 'cross cultural conflict' denote the contrast cultural aspects for adaptation and avoidance of its values in life. Due to the globalization multicultural lifestyle is in trend, people from various cultures adopt some other cultural values and wants to develop their career and life. In that initial period they faced off many problems about the cross cultural diversities in tradition, language, costumes, behaviour, food and wearing of clothes. These changes turn into familial clashes when two different cultural people are living in the family. Their diverse thought and way of life brought cross cultural conflicts.

Daswani explores these conflicts in Indian America diaspora context. It is a story of a woman named Priya. A girl who brought up in conservative family in Delhi, she was the youngest among the four sisters. But eventually her marriage proposal comes first and she got married with Sanjay, a person who lived in America. Her immigration in multicultural America put herself into cross cultural atmosphere.

Priya being an Indian girl tried to settle there. Her Indian thought, culture, costumes and traditions are completely in contrast, she said in beginning of the novel as "No woman in my family has ever had a job" (Daswani, 1) when she went in America her mother-in-law enforced her to start work. Daswani represents cross cultural views of Indian and American culture. In India, women are prohibited to work out side by family but in America family enforced to work. It views in Priya's mother-in-law stated to her as "This is not India. In this country everybody works" (Daswani, 1). It is no matter that she was newly wedded woman. Priya being an Indian woman thought her life was same as per Indian tradition in America but she shocked when she heard this statement because she was the first woman in her family going to abroad and has no idea about foreign culture. Priya's parents have limited vision for her daughters and never think about their daughter's life in abroad but Priya wedding led her to America, in Los Angeles, the city Hollywood.

In America, Priya's faced a multicultural people at the Tom Bradley Terminal of Los Angeles International Airport. She was astonished by the huge variety of people which makes America a multicultural country. She never shows this kind of

variety even on television in India. Daswani depicted this as:

Television in India doesn't show you the variety of humanity, their complexion and clothes and culture so removed from my own: the black women with her tight trousers and inch long purple nails, checking my immigration papers; the waiflike Chinese man the small serious spectacles waiting for his gray-haired mother to make her way through customs; the fat white fellow bellowing at his children to get out of the way so he could heaves his luggage on to the way yard trolley. (Daswani, 3)

It views the American variety of multicultural identity. Priya's arrival in America begin her struggle, the contrast lifestyle of food, clothes, traditions and belief system become obstacles in her life. She remembered her homeland and felt alienation in the host country. Her mother-in-laws treat her as a typical Indian daughter-in-law, working in kitchen and follow the familial duties. But Priya opposes this to Sanjay when he told her to clean tables by saying that why would I clean up when my wife is here for this? She replied that she was her maid not servant. She revert the tradition of mild Hindu wife which she suffered from past week. Her attitude of breaking of tradition observes when she defended herself and said "Don't think that I am some kind of a village bride because I from India and you are living in America" (Daswani 5). This statement shows her courage which helps her to create her identity in Los Angeles. Priya has dream to become a journalist but her in-laws family didn't like and approved her wish. She joins the work as receptionist in *Hollywood Insider*. But her inner desire forced her to fulfil her wish. Daswani represents the multicultural America and variety of communities, Priya's integration with them and the difficulties she faced while working with these diversities. She felt alienated, and depressed in such multicultural atmosphere. It views that in Indian diaspora, alienation comes in their mind while they faced cross cultural scenario in host countries. The people living in America suffered

from this dilemma of cultural identity, Stuart Hall says that:

Identity is never singular but is multiply constructed across intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. (Hall)

Priya breaks the traditional belief system of Indian society about woman. In America, her job as a receptionist represents Indian culture; she wore a Sari and Indian traditional clothes which becomes her identity. In the initial stage, she faced isolated due to this different outlook but gradually she assimilated and got recognition. Her look and talent helps her to fulfil her dream to become a journalist. On one occasion she got the opportunity to take an interview of a famous Hollywood actor named Rex Hauser. This was the beginning of her dream. She continues her interviews and established her identity as a journalist. Her in-laws family is unaware of this fact. Priya knows her family that they did not allow her to take interviews in hotel rooms with celebrities. This orthodoxy and partiality becomes obstacle to her identity formation in America. She broke this and walked on the way of her dream but her familial life is collapsed by her dream when her in-laws know about her real work. Daswani represents Indian orthodoxy about the freedom of woman, their dream, desire and identity. Her in-laws want only familial aspects and money comes from her job but not understand the importance of her life. The condition of Priya represents the diasporic scenario of Indian immigrants' women who were migrated after their marriage. The conservative mentality of Indian belief system carried in multicultural America because it is deep rooted in individual's life as Divakaruni depicted through Priya's mother-in-laws and her sister-in-laws Malini.

Divakaruni depicts the situation of Indian woman's marriage life in abroad. The expectations from family and cross cultural assimilation become obstacle in their identity formation. When her in-laws knows the fact about her job Priya's marriage life was collapsed; Sanjay her husband who loved her was not favoured or defended her wife but supports his mother. These clashes brought changes in their relationship. Priya remembered her Indian

life and wants to abandoned all the familial responsibilities but being an Indian girl she only felt regret about her marriage life. It shows that Indian conservative attitude change the relationship and broke the intimacy between husband and wife. The multicultural atmosphere of America provides her opportunity to fulfil her dream but the conservative belief system destroy her hope. Priya's transforming identity in America was the major reason for her familial collapse. Divakaruni depict her marital relationship as:

Sanjay, it goes nothing to do with the house or food. Marriage should be about more than that. I don't feel appreciated. We never really talk. (Daswani, 256)

Daswani, explore the transformation of Priya's identity in American society, her transformation from traditional Indian to western outlooks, didn't like her in-laws. They never allow her to wear the western clothes. For them Indian traditional culture is supreme and her daughter-in-laws should carried it out in multicultural America. When her in-laws visited her job's place, they shocked to see the clothes of Priya. She wore a Chinese type top and black colour denim jeans with high hills which never allowed in her family. Even her husband Sanjay too asked her that where is your *sindoor*? These all the traditional life she abandoned and make her identity as journalist. Her life become complicated and the nature of her in-laws turn into hatred. Her mother-in-law called to Priya's parents and told that she speaks lie to us about the job and added that she stole and too lazy which is not true. Daswani views that the cultural values of native culture is not abandoned by diaspora communities. They have some conservative attitude and it brought familial clashes in multicultural society. Priya's return to India makes Sanjay to understand the situation of her life. He repents and went Indian to get back her with him.

Daswani represents the importance of Indian cultural values and rituals in life. When Sanjay came in India, he met Kaki who solved their problem. Daswani represents Kaki as a woman with Indian cultural wisdom. She makes them understand and

reunited Sanjay and Priya once again. She said to Sanjay that

In America I understand people living together before they get married, to see if it will work. Consider your past year that. Now, today, you are married, 'she said. Never holdan ill thought for anyone, and all the world's riches will be yours.'(Daswani, 303)

It views the Indian cultural values through traditional rituals, and the differences between two cultural aspects. In Indian tradition Marriage is an auspicious ceremony with lifelong bondage of husband-wife but in American culture it is a trail first. The Indian tradition teaches us to be with a partner in difficult situations of life but in western it is only a reason for divorce which is very common in their culture. Daswani at end of the novel reunited Sanjay and Priya, Sanjay pardon for his mistake and allow her wife to choose her career in Journalism and gives her freedom of life which represents resolution of cross cultural conflict.

Works Cited

- Daswani, Kavita. *Everything Happens for a Reason*. Harper Collins, 2004. Print.
- Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage, 2000. Print
- "Stuart Hall Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. Xplore. Web. 15 Aug. 2021.