

# A Hypnotic Cultural and Traditional Touch in Characters A View on Chitra Baneerjee Divakurni's Novel "Oleander Girl"

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## Abstract:

The Novel "Oleander Girl" states the state of a young girl about her left orphan history and finding out the secrecy behind being orphan. A search on the vital truth of her parents and the mystery behind the death of her mother. Chitra portrays universal truth of love, affection, culture, tradition, bondage, enmity, nostalgia, dress code, disputes on religion, caste and race, betrayal and gratitude through various character inscribed in the novel.

**Keywords:** Hypnotic, vibe, novelic, apt, betrayal, fumed, fidgets, mantasha, Chandra chur, makarbala, hypnotic, reverence, sesame, depicts, splurging, diligent, inscribed, disk, adorn, chutti, billai, suryakala, Chandrakala, chungu, seer, miruthanga melam, prevailed.

## Coined Words:

Enmity, novelic, seperatual love, infactual love, gratitudinal love, splurging love and resistant love.

## INTRODUCTION:

"A Mistress of story teller"- Chitra portrays a young girl Karobi Roy, grandfather Bimal Prasad Roy, grandmother Sarojini, mother Anuradha, father Rob Lacey, fiancée Rajat, mother-in-law Jayashree, father-in-law Barasaab, sister-in-law Pia missy, their cook, friends, drivers, maids and servants were defined as strong hypnotic character being loyal and true towards themselves and their surroundings, which gives a positive vibe to move the entire story towards the positive ending without hurting the ethics and reality of the practical human life. More over Mitra the negative character in the novel also dealt in a careful way so that it won't go beyond the limit which will spoil the entire story.

The Indian culture, spoken in the voice of Chitra through her novelic character. Their profile, education nostalgic thoughts, reverence towards each other, anger, emotions, love and betrayal been ornaments for the novelic character, which was apt according to the situation in the novel.

The title 'Oleander Girl' was apt for this novel as it depicts the name of the heroine – Karobi, as well as her character, her name has been decided by her mother when she was in her womb, one more reason for the selection of name is that Anu couldn't be in the quality of Oleander flower, which has been discovered by Karobi through her father. Even her grandmother thought Karobi will be the right name for Anu's daughter as Anu love growing shrubs of Oleander in their garden.

**Dress Culture:**

Chitra had a talent to describe the tradition of Indian culture dressing methodology during one's wedding or engagement, with all its trends which brings the entire situation in front of our eyes as if we are admiring each and everything viewing directly through our eyes.

In the novel, Grandmother unfolds the stiff pink silk sari which has been bought for her daughter Anu's marriage long years back, tucks to Karobi's waist, she fidgets and grandma make the pleats straight, corrects the gold boarder to be visible, decorates Karobi with small disk to her neck and a long necklace which has been given as dowry to Sarojini by her parents, adorn her with earrings supported by little chains hooked in the hair. Two headed snake arm band for the upper hand. She decorated Karobi's hair with mantasha, Chandra chur and makarbala which was unknown by many now-a-days. Sarojini touched each ornament and shared nostalgic thoughts of each ornament who gave and what was the situation behind to get it.

Karobi's grandparents and her in law's dressed in a traditional way as such as grand without leaving their tradition, but fumed with rich thoughts as they were upcoming rich family among others. Karobi's cook in traditional saree of Bengal. She didn't give up the Muslim driver Asif who dressed in his own traditional way as Muslims used to. Chitra insists the traditional dressing way of Mr. Bhattacharyya wearing turban and white dhoti to the temple. She also talks about Anu & Karobi when they were in America, they could wear the dress suits to American Culture but they didn't as they were for their Indian culture. She insisted on the character stating that Karobi cut her hair only for money not for the foreign culture.

**Bondage Between Characters:**

The bondage between Karobi and grandparents were great reflection of their **unconditional love**, where her grandparents became parents to comfort her to satisfy her need with their culture and made her not to worry about her dead parents. Karobi gets through her mother's **seperatual love** towards her father in a piece of paper, when she dreamt about her mother and imagined the presence of her mother's soul, which made Karobi to search about her mother secrecy behind her death. The kiss and hug of Rajat towards Karobi portrays **ardent love**, which led them in their engagement and to be married as soon as possible. Via's bond towards Karobi portrays **infactuational love**, as he helped and admired her, the wholesome during her visit towards America when she was in search of her father. Bond between Jayashree and Barasaab makes comfortable for **intimated married couple love** where they never give up each other and shares positives and negatives of their life. Karobi's bond towards her future In - law were **parental love**, so she called them as papa, maman, like wise she used to call her own parents if they were alive. Pia's bond towards Karobi was mentioned to be a **sisterly love**, where she shares everything about her family members, admires Karobi's hair and takes photo to have a nostalgic memory with her. Karobi's bond with Rob Lacey acknowledged as **fatherly love** when she really finds him and get to know about his love towards Anu and herself before her birth.

The bond between Asif and Pia were wonderful **affectionate love** which makes Asif comfortable to take care of her and made Pia to call him A.A in short, shares incidents which she faces in her life. The bond between Asif and Bose family, Sardar, Cook, Bahadur and Roy's family, well as was **gratitudinal love**, where they never utter a word against their bosses and do their work as per the instruction of their master. Sonia's bond towards Rajat was a **splurging love**, which made Rajat to avoid and quit her bond, where she takes revenge at the end. Mitra bond with Bose's was considered to be **employee bond** where he makes the Bose's to believe whatever he says and thinks as such as he announces there was a massive loss

in their business in abroad, later they came to know that he was doing something against their business and made them to fall in their pride. Seema's bond towards her unborn baby considered as **motherly love** which makes her to ply from America to India to save guard her baby and her health against her spouse Mitra. Desai's bond towards Bose's was said to be **diligent love** which make him to detect Karobi's father in America without any details, even he never bothered about the loss made by Mitra, he also intimated the situation of Karobi towards Bose's, which preserved her life. Sheikh Rahman's bond toward Asif was **masterly love** which consoled Asif even though he damaged his costly Rolls as it was for a good sake, affords his medical expenses. Shikha bond toward Jayashree said to be **resistant love** where she cared about Pia's protection, which made her to pick and drop during her schools when Bose's where in the threat of attack. Overall, servant bond towards one and other is considered to be **sibling love** where they care about other even though they work for different master and did different job as such as it was scheduled by their masters.

### Caste and Race Discrimination:

Rajat's inexperience in the business produce riot between the Hindu and Muslim workers in their ware house, which becomes a big issue. Rajat tries to solve it in various manner but it results in quarrel. The supporters threaten Mrs. Bose, where she was brought to safer side by Asif, Jayashree was afraid of Asif too as he belongs to the same caste in which Shikha helped her to take care of Pia to take and drop her to school, which in turn made Asif to feel bad and moved to serve Sheikh Rahman. Even when they been attacked after the return from the hotel for Pia's birthday party, both been saved by Asif once again which resulted in major disaster.

Mr. Battacharya one of the Indian Politician was keen in the Hindu culture and tradition was really happy to hear Rajat to be married with Karobi as they belong to authentic Hindu family with rich in tradition and culture. He admired the temple in Roy's house and used to visit often in his traditional suit. His belief in the culture and tradition gave way to solve the problem of Bose in the request of Sarojini. He even rectified the repair and damage prevailed in Roy's house.

Mr. Rob Lacey, an African American, love with Anu, lived together but unmarried due to the promise given by Anu to her father Bimal Roy in front of goddess in their temple, which proved even a promise had a lot of meaning in one's life as such as Gandhi gave promise to his mother when he travelled abroad for further studies crossing the water. Bimal Roy denied Anu's request to take away her promise as well as he sent back Rob stating and showing the proof for the death of Anu and her child. These two incidents prove that Bimal never and ever wanted to give up his culture and tradition even he knows that was wrong act towards humanity.

### Irony of the Title:

Chitra suggested a suitable title for this novel as 'Oleander Girl'. Oleander flower looks beautiful, it can be admired it does less harm to insects and reptiles but it is a poisonous shrub for human and animals. Anu loved Oleander for its beauty and its character, she wanted to be like Oleander but she couldn't, she was not dare to say that she wanted to marry Rob. She was not dare to leave her father and his promise to settle with Rob and enjoy her life. She was so dependent, afraid of her father and their tradition and culture, so she couldn't take decision of marrying Rob, which made others to think and talk about Karobi's unguenuine birth. So Bimal Roy planned to grow up Karobi with their tradition and pride. But Anu expected her baby to be named after Oleander as she wanted the baby to be soft and gentle to the liked ones and to be

poisonous to the unliked once with its unconditioned beauty.

### **I admired!**

I was admiring the way Chitra wrote this Oleander Girl novel, where she reflects the culture, dress, heritage of Indians, which she didn't want to give up for a sesame. She talks about the caste, religion and race which was not annoying to the readers as it was the true statement of life on those days, even though it is practiced now a days indirectly.

I admired Chitra for not forgetting the tradition of dressing style of Indians even though she migrated to other country. She depicted the same with her characters in the novel too. It made me to remember my engagement and the arrangements made in a grand way and the golden jewels purchased for me with the retired money of my father.

I admired the way she said about the love and bond with one another which made me to think about the practical life of one's and their unconditional love. I remember how my parents, sibling and in-law's treating me still with love and great care. No words for the unconditional couple love with my spouse still prevailing even though 20 years got over.

I admired Chitra when she said about Sarojini's dressing style for her granddaughter, the way how she got the ornaments and the name of the ornaments. She didn't give up the culture of one's on their origin. Here I remember how I had dressed for my marriage a grand silk saree, relatives decorated me with forehead chutti, in the hair, straight on the middle of the head peacock billai, on either of hair partition, right side suryakala billai, left side Chandrakala billai, the entire hair surrounded with pearl mala then completed with chungu. Small necklace followed by long necklace followed by two headed swan long chain. Arm band in both the hands, dozen bangles in each hand, finger rings, hip band and anklet, made me to go through the nostalgic moments of the past.

I admired the way how she said about the promise made by Anu and how it was kept up by her and how she wanted to take back by her father and waiting for the permission from father to get married with Rob Lacey.

I admired the said norms about the temple of Roy's where they followed each and every tradition of worship, pleasing and soothing relaxation they feel, when they prayed in front of the Goddess. I remember the way my spouse welcomed from the temple to the marriage hall with nadaswaram and miruthanga melam followed by the relatives carrying all types of fruits which is called as seer in Tamil

I admired the dispute of Hindu and Muslim workers brought by Chitra in the novel through the characters, but she solved in a pleasant way without causing any religious disputes on the mind of the readers.

I admired the way how she made Karobi to find her father and the truth behind her birth and mother. She had to go through the way of Mitra, who has to help her in America but he delayed due to the aspects of Bose family. She went through the sufferings of male harassment of 2 unknown persons in the name of her father, when she was in search of her biological father. But Chitra portrayed Karobi as a strong girl even though she was in teen to tackle and overcome the harassment.

I admired how she made her heroine to handle Vic and Rajat and also admired the way how her heroine explained the truth about her father to her future in-law's. In this part I remember one of my team-mate who ended her life as she couldn't take a correct decision on her life whether to be married or leave the guy who was suspicious about her love and followed her due to the doubts prevailed in him without reasons.

I admired the way how she made the character Karobi to speak with her superiors about her education and

to complete it further without interruption, even though she was in a great dilemma whether she is going to get married with Rajat or not. She wanted to get away the painful thought of marriage and to concentrate on studies. Here I remembered the way how I got through my studies after my marriage with great difficulties, dealing in-law's, husband and my daughter.

I admired the way of cooking style of Bengali's and the way how they honour elders, how they present themselves in front of others and how they respect each and every one genuinely. When I read the dishes of cook in the novel, I remembered the way how my mother used to cook delicious Indian dishes, serves and feels happy when we thank or say it was tasty and marvelous. I too tried the same as soon as I married, where I got only a better comment on my dishes, which made me to feel bad in the beginning of my married life. But later with lot of improvement, all appreciated me as a best cook among all my relatives.

### Conclusion:

I conclude by stating that Mrs. Chitra Banerjee gave a positive ending to the novel which made every reader to go on with a right approach to their life with what they want, they can afford or get it, that too in a genuine way, she also says not to take any credit which becomes a failure in our life. Through the novelic character Karobi and Seema, she portrays that they sacrificed their hair for money to solve their problem and through the character of Mr. & Mrs. Bose to become a partner with Mr. Battacharya for getting fund to solve their economic issue, Chitra gives a remedy through the decision of Mr. and Mrs. Bose to quit the plan of new apartment for their son and to spend less money by conducting marriage in the Temple and a reception in a small hotel calling only few known, not all. Through this Chitra wanted to state that we should spend according to our need not more than what we don't have for our luxurious life. She ends with positivity which gives the reader a smile at the end. I felt that each and every situation which I read in the novel meant a lot for me that I went through the situation and brought the nostalgic moment in front of my eyes.

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