

## Diasporic Female Bonding in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the relationship between female characters, Anju and Sudha, in the *Sister of My Heart* novel by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The female bonding displayed by Anju and Sudha are strong aspects that plot the story in the novel. This research analyzes how female bonding is portrayed in the novel and also how it affects Anju's diasporic life and Sudha's domestic life. To accommodate it, this research using one of the feminist survival strategy, female bonding, and also a branch of the Diaspora theory, the Diaspora consciousness. This study uses critical interpretation as data analysis. This analysis shows two conclusions, first, female bonding between Anju and Sudha is described from infancy, adolescence and until they become wives and mothers. Second, the influence of female bonding on Anju's diasporic life and Sudha's domestic life remain strongly even though they live apart by American and Indian distances.

**Keywords:** *female bonding, feminist strategy, diaspora, diasporic consciousness*

### Abstrak

Studi ini menganalisa hubungan antar karakter wanita, Anju dan Sudha, dalam novel *Sister of My Heart* karya Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Ikatan perempuan yang ditampilkan oleh Anju dan Sudha merupakan aspek kuat yang menjadi plot cerita dalam novel. Penelitian ini menganalisa bagaimana ikatan perempuan digambarkan pada novel dan juga bagaimana ikatan perempuan mereka memengaruhi kehidupan diaspora Anju dan kehidupan rumah tangga Sudha. Untuk mengakomodisikannya, penelitian ini menggunakan salah satu strategi perempuan untuk bertahan hidup, yaitu ikatan perempuan, dan juga cabang dari teori Diaspora, yaitu kesadaran diaspora. Kajian ini menggunakan interpretasi kritis sebagai analisis data. Analisis ini menghasilkan dua kesimpulan, pertama, ikatan perempuan antara Anju dan Sudha digambarkan dari sejak bayi, remaja dan sampai saat mereka menjadi istri dan ibu. Kedua, pengaruh ikatan perempuan pada kehidupan diaspora Anju dan kehidupan rumah tangga Sudha tetap terjalin kuat walaupun mereka hidup terpisah oleh jarak Amerika dan India.

**Kata kunci:** *ikatan perempuan, strategi feminis, diaspora, kesadaran diaspora*

### INTRODUCTION

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* portrays the strong women relationship which empowering each other to overcome the obstacles they face in their life. Divakaruni was born in India in 1956 and currently living in Houston, Texas, where she teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston. She is a brilliant writer and poet who not only express her concern on Indian women through her winning short stories and novels, but also her participation of joining organizations that its purpose to help South Asian or South Asian American women in distress and in situations of domestic abuse., in San Francisco Bay area and Huston. In her interview with a journal, *Contemporary Women's Writing* 6:2 July, she describes her works have an all-time literary theme and love. Each of her characters deals with it differently, making choices that are sometimes positive and sometimes flawed,

leading to many problems for themselves and people around them (Zupancic, 2012).

*Sister of My Heart* is written in narattion of two point of views, Anju and Sudha. It has two parts, the first is The Princess in the Palace of Snakes and the second is The Queen of Swords. The story is set in 1980's Calcutta, India and America. The main characters of the novel is Anju and Sudha, with their three mothers, Gouri Ma, Pishi, and Aunt Nalini. There are also some minor characters but also quite significant in the story like Gopal, Bijoy, Singhji, Ashok, Ramesh and Sunil. The problems revolve around the women, the first is about the three widow women, Gouri Ma, Pishi and Aunt Nalini, who struggle to raise two daughters in India patriarchal world which is so hard for them. The second is the arranged marriage which lead Sudha into an unhappy marriage. The third is how the sisters, Anju and Sudha, sacrifices for each other.

At the beginning of the story, it shows Anju and Sudha's closeness despite their opposite characteristics. Anju

is a brave young girl, very spontaneous and straight-forward, while Sudha is a calm, feminine and delicate young girl. They are very caring for each other. They grow up together and are very accustomed with each other's presence. Until one day, Sudha knows a big secret of her family from Pishi that she is not the real Chatterjee's family. And her father, Gopal, is the one who responsible for Anju's father, Bijoy death. From then, she feel ashamed and willing to sacrifice even more of her happiness for Sudha.

After the marriage, Anju and Sunil go to America, the relationship between Sudha and Anju is cracking because Anju feels jealous for her beautiful cousin Sudha for she caught a sight of Sunil taking Sudha fallen handkerchief on their wedding day. In America, Anju gets to college, driving, such things which is for some people think is unacceptable in India. While Sudha is experiencing the miserable marriage life in India. She still cannot fully serves her husband right. She does not even love him in the first place. It is worsen because her mother in law, Mrs. Sanyal, is a bossy woman, who often treats her meanly. She even accusing Sudha is infertile woman and forced her to do everything for her pregnancy plan. It is torturing Sudha's self-pride, because only her doing every effort to get pregnant, while her husband is free from her mother in law and the society's prejudice. Based on the background, this study would like to discuss the female bonding and its effects to Anju's diasporic life and Sudha's domestic life. According to Padilla-Walker in her study published in the *Journal of Family Psychology* as quoted in (Mookherjee, 2015), female bonding is how the sisters protect each other in a family and though the siblings in a family seem to fight and bicker constantly with each other, once they get to adulthood, the sisters tend to protect each other from feeling unloved, lonely, guilty, self-conscious and fearful and did not matter whether the sister was younger or older.

As noted in (Mookherjee, 2015), Hudson – Weems defines female bonding in *Africana Womanism* as an asexual relationship between women who entrust and amenably share their fears, hopes, dreams and true feelings of each other. Women friendship in which completely understanding, with endless support for each other and enjoying each other as a company in their lives is inestimable. Therefore it is difficult for any women going through hardships in their lives without a sincere support system of genuine sisterhood.

One of the feminist strategy of survival is female bonding. It has been more widely explore in the West than in the East, especially by Black women writers like Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston and many other writers who have been experienced oppression double marginalization of race and sex. In their works, they usually show and explore female bonding as a weapon and shield in the misogynyn world which degrading themselves because of their class, race and gender. They

emphasize the significance of female solidarity aloft other familial ties as an endearment to healing, stronghold, encouragement, and reassurance.

Robin Cohen in his book, *Global Diasporas An Introduction, Second Edition*, stated that diaspora studies have gone through four phases. The first phase is when the term Diaspora, usually capitalized and used only in singular form, is purposed to study Jewish experience. Then from the 1960s and 1970s the authentic meaning was outstretch, becoming more common as a description of the dispersion of Africans, Armenians, Irish, and the Palestenians. The second phase, 1980s as William Safran argued in his book *'Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return'*, diaspora was deployed as 'a metaphoric designation' to describe *different categories* of people – 'expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*'. Safran also made a point that the term now designated a vast array of *different peoples* who either applied the term to themselves or had the label conferred upon them. Diaspora was used for more heterogeneous categories. The third phase, from the mid 1990s diaspora is used for the people who live outside their homeland. The fourth phase is by the turn of century, diaspora stands for the combination people in the categories from the previous phases. It is marked by a modified revalidation of the diasporic idea, including its core elements, common features and ideal types (Cohen, 2008).

Hujuala Rika Ayu in her thesis, *Past and Present in Bharati Mjukerjee's Wife (1975) and Jasmine (1989)*, also asserts that the meaning and formation of diaspora is changing from time to time. The advance technology in communication makes the diasporic people to be actively involved in a global networking which create 'new' cultural reproduction around the world. Contemporary diaspora is no longer a 'one-way' movement out of nation, as technological advances enables diasporic people to return to or visit their homeland (Ayu, 2011).

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define 'diaspora' as "The voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions." in their book *Key concepts in Postcolonial Studies* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998 p.68). The deportation is primarily based on three types of phenomena which are namely forced, half forced or half willed and willed consequences. The example of the force exile is the Jewish community. The British Empire during the colonial period uprooted people to serve them in different parts of the world and their settlement in foreign country was half forced. The third phenomena of expatriation is the willed choice of migrants from the third world countries for better opportunities in the developed countries (Agnihotri, 2014).

Diasporic communities do not disunited their affiliation with their homeland, but establish various relations

in foreign land. The feelings of longing for the homeland, the curiosity devotedness of its traditions, languages, religions raise the diasporic literature. This type of literature is embrace individual's or community's attachments with the homeland. The immigrants tend to have the strong attachments to the particular tradition and behaviors from their homeland. That is the main reason for the diasporic literature to raise. The longing from homeland, the struggle to fit in the new home and the questioning of their identities are the problems in diasporic literature. Diasporic fiction consist of the complexity experience of diasporas in their various tinges and symptoms and explains them with the new potentials, new directions and new approaches of idea. Some famous writers from this genre are Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, V.S. Naipaul, Bharti Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Chitra B. Divakaruni, and Meera Sayal. Their works are abundant with the diasporic consciousness, which strongly witness social realities, longings and feelings in addition to the creativity of the writers (Agnihotri, 2014).

A significant uniqueness that differentiate diasporas from individual migrants is their consciousness of their origins and roots. Communication and visits can strengthen the diasporic consciousness and it is reserve within memories, story-telling, writings, songs, or any other creative forms ("Diasporas," n.d.). Uma Prameswaran in *Trishanku and Other Writings* has discussed diasporic consciousness and observed, The first is nostalgia for the homeland, left behind mingled with fear in strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy in adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno-culture issues. The fourth is when they have arrived and started participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. To reserve the values of the homeland in a foreign land which has different ambience and its own value, create particular kind of consciousness. This consciousness entangles inner conflicts, unresolved dilemmas, unsettled conflicts, unread complexities, and unanswered questions. Women's life in diasporic situations can be doubly painful-struggling with the physical and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and work with the claims of old and new patriarchies (Agnihotri, 2014).

Stuart Hall in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* has concluded that the migrant's dreams are pointless and it is impossible to return to the homeland. The longing for the homeland is countered by the desire to longing to the new home, so the migrant remains creatures of the edge, the peripheral man (Williams, Patrick, & Chrisman, 1994)

### METHOD

The focus of this study is female bonding and its effects in a literary work, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*. It analyses the bonding of the female characters, Anju and Sudha and how it affects Anju's diasporic life and Sudha's domestic life. The method contains several explanations and analysis about the topic on the literary work as the object data. There is a group classification of data; data source, data collection and data analysis. The data source of this study is the novel entitled *Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, published by Anchor Books in 1999. This novel consists of forty two chapters and 322 pages. The data are in the form of direct or indirect quotations, phrases, excerpt and dialogues. This study is using qualitative method in which no numerical data or table is emerged. To gain the data, the researcher does a close reading of the data to find and to classify the data needed in the form of quotations and statements related on the analysis.

This study has several procedural steps to analyze the data until leading the discussion of the research target. First, the researcher does a close reading step of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* to comprehend the contents of the novel and to obtain the certain topic or issue to be analyzed. Second, the found issue is adjusted with the relevant critical approach to get the appropriate analysis of two problems that are going to be discussed on this study. Third, the data is classified based on the theoretical approach to be used in this study. Which are concepts of female bonding and diaspora obtained from several journals and articles Fourth, the researcher draws the analysis and discussion of the statement problem to reveal the purpose of this study.

### ANALYSIS

The women's role is always put in a lower position than men. For their entire life, women in India cannot be independent. At first as a daughter, she obeys her father, as a wife she obeys her husband and even when she become a widow, she obeys her sons. Along these lines, women must find a way to be able to survive the harsh world of patriarchy. Naturally the women find the similarity and understanding each other, this called female bonding, as one of the feminist strategy of survival. The issues of women discrimination in India were put together in Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*. In a form of narrative from Anju and Sudha point of views, Divakaruni gives a deeper understanding of women when they are faced by the demons of society. The first thing that going to be analyzed is the depiction of female bonding of Anju and Sudha. It involves where they were babies, going through rebellion phase as teenagers, until when they are blooming as beautiful wives in other's family.

The relationship of Anju and Sudha built because they live in the same house as cousins, and through adolence their bonding become more like an emotional support they cannot live without. Anju and Sudha are the

opposite. Anju is brave, spontaneous, has a dream to expand her view by travelling around the world and also yearning to go to college.

Meanwhile, Sudha is calm, collected, feminine, has a hobby of knitting and dreaming of having a family of her own. They are fire and water, the yin and yang. They are completely different but that is why they fit for each other. Female bonding in human relationships can be influenced by some factors, for instance age, culture, sexual orientation, marital status and race. It can be seen within family relationships such as mother-daughter relationship, sister-sister relationship or even among women who do not have family ties. Among the culture which often disregard woman's position, Asian women or African-American women, tend to unconsciously make a bonding with the fellow women.

As Kadidia (2008) noted in Collins, "the high concentration of U.S Black women in domestic work and the racial segregation in housing and school make them able to share the experience in their organizational networks and seeking comfort through it. The knowledge on how to survive as U.S Black women make them enable to establish a particular perspective of Black women's on gender-specific patterns of racial segregation and its accompanying economic penalties (Collins, 2000). This opportunity allows them to build coalitions for the benefit of the community" (p. 10) (Sy, 2008).

It is quite similar to Anju and Sudha's life in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*. Anju and Sudha are cousins who live together in Calcutta. Anju is the daughter of an upper-caste Calcutta family, whereas Sudha is the daughter of the black sheep of that family.

Since they were in their mothers' womb, they have been living together in the same roof, their bonding is exceptionally strong, it can be seen from the scenes below,

But never Sudha. I could never hate Sudha. Because she is my other half. The sister of my heart. (Divakaruni, 1999:11)

It's been this way ever since we were born. Even before I could walk, Pishi has told me, I'd crawl down the maze of corridors looking for Sudha, both of us shrieking with baby laughter when I finally found her. (Divakaruni, 1999:12)

In the scene above, we can see that their bonding begin in their early childhood. They always seek for each other comforts and even when having an argument, they cannot upset at each other. The reason why they behave that way is because their bond is created since they were in early age and as they grew up, the bonding is getting stronger. Mookerje noted that female bonding is one of the survival bond that women built in their lives and it is a platonic love between females which provides comfort, security, moral support, and encouraging kind of relationship (Hudson-

Weems, 1998) (Mookherjee, 2015). The facts that they always look after each other in every situation makes people suspicious about their closeness as a lesbian relationship and they try to separate them. From the nuns who ran their convent school tried to separate their classes, the neighbours who badmouthing them, saying that is expected when there is no man in the household, and also Aunt Nalini's friend who scrunch in disgust seeing Anju And Sudha always together.

They grow up in the household of women only, Gouri Ma (Anju's mother), Aunt Nalini (Sudha's mother), and Pishi (the widow sister of Anju's father) alongside with Shingji, their old chauffeur and Ramur Ma, the vinegary old servant woman. The fathers of Anju and Sudha died in the middle of ruby hunting in the dense forests. Anju feels dissatisfied of their fathers' decision, leaving alone their wives who were in their eight's months pregnancy.

When they are sixteen years old, they begin their rebellion by cutting the class in the afternoon and going to the cinema, wearing pants which is something that Indian culture from an upper-caste won't approve, as well as using eyeliner and lipstick. Anju and Sudha are curious to try the things that their family will never permit to do. They are in the age of wanting something to do as they want to prove themselves that they are free people, do not need to be held by traditional moral compass. In *(E) Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women*, Elizabeth Abel noted from Helen Deutsch in *The Psychology of Women* (New York: Gruine & Stratton, 1994), vol. 1, that the adolescent girl strives to become self-dependent from her mother by developing attachments to other women. One often chooses a "best friend" who is an alter ego at around the age of twelve, "an extension of the girl's own ego, with the same age, same interests, and same desires," in order to feel "doubled" and consequently stronger (p.13) (Abel, 1981). It is something that Anju and Sudha have since they were young for they live in the same environment, school and neighbourhood. Their bond is very exceptional and they willing to do anything for their other sister, even if it is mean that they will get a lot of troubles while doing it. Sudha and Anju get grounded after they cut class and go to cinema, but they are glad that neither of them punished alone. It shows that no matter what happen, they will never let each other suffer on one's own. In the middle of the exciting journey of theirs, Sudha falls hard in love for the first time with a stranger who sit beside her during movie playing, named Ashook Gosh, one of a lower-caste man. Their first encounter brings so much things later in their lives.

Their bonding is not always stable, constantly loving each other, of course they also had arguments and ups downs in it. But the biggest clash in their bonding is when Anju has to marry as it is Gouri Ma's wish when she is ill for

she is the only one breadwinner within the family. So is Sudha as her mother, Nalini, wants to marry her off in the first place. Anju's dream about learning more in college, shattered in a blink of an eye. Sudha was the first to received a proposal from a family in Bardhaman, The Sanyal, whose son named Ramesh works as an engineer for Indian Railways. She is so distress about her arranged marriage and her burning feelings towards Ashook. Anju is betrothed with a well-being family, whose son named Sunil is working as a computer scientist in the United States of America. They informally met at the bookstore Chaterjee's family running for 75 years. Instantly, Anju is falling for Sunil who takes interest on Anju's collection of Virginia Woolf's books. On the bride-viewing day, that incident happen. It was the ultimatum of Sunil's family.

"Please don't interrupt me," says his father. "I said I wouldn't ask for a dowry, and so I won't. No doubt Mrs. Chaterjee, who comes from a fine background, already knows what's fitting in this respect. Anyway, a good reputation has always meant more to me than all the money in the world. That's why I broke off talks with family, an unmarried aunt who committed suicide - - you can guess why! I wasn't going to be associated with any of *that*. Better a penniless, ugly girl, I said to my wife, than one whose family is stained with immorality. And there are far too many such families. You'd be amazed, Mrs. Chaterjee, at what we've been discovering - - secret relationships, pregnancies, runaway girls brought back by force - -" (Divakaruni 1999:124)

When Anju went to pick her father's copy of Woolf, Sunil held Sudha arms as she feels dizzy after realizing that she will never be able to elope with Ashook. Although she loves Ashook, Anju's happiness is her ultimate priority. At that moment of realization, she still feels Sunil's hand in her arm. It can be seen as a foreshadowing of the next conflict to their sisterhood. Later that night, Sudha writes a letter of explanation why she cannot elope with Ashook and she gives it to Singhji along with the ring Ashook gave to her. It proves that no matter what, Anju's happiness is her utmost precedence.

At the day of their wedding, Anju and Sudha decided to get married together, Anju noticed how Sunil's voice falters as Sudha passes by, how Sunil trying to answer Ramesh's questions without looking at Ramesh's wife, Anju sensed that her husband is in distress over his emotions for Sudha.

And I — I'm so scoured by rage and helpless love and jealousy that I can't trust my voice to make a civil response. Yes, for the first time in my life I'm consumed by jealousy of Sudha, sister of my heart. (Divakaruni 1999:152)

After the meal, when Sudha tries to put back her handkerchief back in her waistband, it falls to the ground. Anju and Sudha's handkerchief are identical, only their initial names makes the difference. It was when Anju tries to alert Sudha, Sunil bends to pick it up and Anju is the only one who sees him casually slip it into his kurta pocket. At first Anju tries to rationalize the situation, but after seeing the whole evening of Sunil tries to suppress his feeling towards Sudha, she cannot hold it anymore. She burst it out to Sudha eventhough Anju knows that it is not her sister's fault. Anju is far too deep in love with her husband until she does not hear Sudha's explanation first. That is the first time that Anju and Sudha's bonding is cracked quite deep.

But the habit of loving and caring for each other's is die hard. When the time of Anju's departure to America going nearer, they reach out to one another. Anju is accepting Sudha's invitation for visiting her in Sanyal Family, eventhough she has been avoiding her for a whole month after the wedding, is an indication that Anju is still deeply care for the sister of her heart, Sudha.

I drop my bags and throw my arms around her. In spite of all my insecurities, in spite of the oceans that'll be between us soon and the men that are between us already, I can never stop loving Sudha. It's my habit, and it's my fate. (Divakaruni 1999:173)

Both of them realized that they are still sisters, no matter how big the rock thrown at their lives, they will fight it together. And no matter how far they travel from each other, their hearts will always be inseparable. Mookherje noted in her journal that Charlott Perkins Gilman (1915) in *Herald*, a utopian fiction, exploring the depth of female bonding even when encounter with the hardest challenge is remained indestructible and undying. They have each other since the beginning of their lives and it will remain until the end of the line (Mookherjee, 2015). It is something that Anju and Sudha have since the beginning.

After they mending their bond, they are faced with new challenge. Living in different parts of the world. Anju goes to America, to follow his husband, as well as chasing her dream to study in college. While Sudha stays in India obeying her husband and her mother-in-law.

Their main communication is through letters. The reason behind it because it is much more affordable than the phone calls, and they get to be more thoroughly while exchanging the news with words rather than talking rushly in phones. The lives that Anju and Sudha leading are very contradict. Anju's life in America is juggling between the responsibilities as a wife and a college student. On the other hand, Sudha leading a quiet live in India as a wife who constantly seeking her mother-in-law approval by working hard in house cores.

In America Anju gets what she been dreamt of since she was a child. She gets the privilege as an Indian women to be allowed to study in college, even more by her husband, she also be taught to drive by him, wearing jeans, boots and even cut her hair short. What is unexpected for her is the longing feelings of home when she is doing what she hates the most, cooking and walking into an empty apartment. She misses the commotion of her home and its warmth. To overcome the hollow in her chest, she writes for Sudha and the mothers and reading their letters is able to give sentimentality in her heart. Anju keeps the letters from Sudha and treasure it well. Meanwhile, Sudha burns every single one of Anju's letters. That is because her mother-in-law's hawk eyes are always intimidating her as if she demands Sudha to let her read Anju's letters. Anju and Sudha swore an oath not to let anyone reading their letters ever. It is such a commitment that their connection is solely for their own and will not allow such an intruder in their relationship.

After the third years of marriage with no news of child from Sudha, Mrs. Sanyal grows impatiently. She starts giving an accusation look toward Sudha and even force her to go to the traditional doctor, modern doctor and the shrine to beg for a child to come to her womb. It really humiliating for Sudha because all the doctors say that she is fine and even suggesting that her husband must go through the same examinations like her. This part shows that as a woman in her in-law household, she cannot do anything to that but to swallow the bitterness by herself. Dr. Ratna Rao in *Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels From The Perspective of Feminist Theories* noted from Rani Dharker explanations in "Marriage as Purdah: Fictional Rendering of a Social Reality, Margins of Erasure" : "The woman learns to adopt certain strategies in order to survive within marriage. These strategies conceal her true self to survive much like a purdah hides the line of the body"(54) (Rao, 2016). It is quite the same thing that happen to Anju and Sudha. Anju feels the connection to the homeland is not fading through her constant communication with Sudha, and Sudha as well feels ease in her heart for being able to get strength from Anju through her full of American spirit letters and knowing that Anju happy is matter the most, for she is her other half.

After the visit in the shrine of the goddess of fertility, miraculously her plea was heard and she is carrying a life within herself. At the same time, Anju breaks out the news from America that she is pregnant as well. Their letters exchange get more frequent and they both are very excited for their pregnancies. It is emphasizing how wonderful the connection is when women when through the same phase together. Although their arms cannot embrace their swollen belly, their hearts feel contend and warmed.

It is all happy until one day, Mrs. Sanyal finds out the gender of her soon-to-be grand child is woman. She tells Sudha to undergo an abortion. It is such a common practice

in India, even until these days. Males are more preferred for various reasons, that they are the breadwinners (Batasumatary 2015), obliged to take care of family indefinitely (Tandon and Sharma 2006) which is advantageous as India lacks of social security for elderly (Sumner 2009). Furthermore, the extensive amount of dowry requisite by the groom's family upon marriage has discourage families from having female children (Nayak 2014). Patrilineal inheritance ensures the continuation of the family name and ensures property is kept within the family lineage (Sumer 2009) (Vickery & Teijlingen, 2017). She is furious and insist that the first grand child is must a man, who will continue the Sanyal's trah. The situation is getting worse, because her husband is a man who has no voice of his own. His actions are echoing his mother's words. He does not protect Sudha as supposed to be, instead he abandon her and saying that he wants to left alone. Such devastating turning point happens in her life awakes her inner self-recrimination. Sudha does not want to give up her baby, so she boldly takes a taxi to the train station. This scene shows that she is fully aware of her actions and the latter consequences, because she will smear mud on her family being a divorcee, and willing to risk all of that, but Sudha needs an affirmation from her other heart. She calls Anju and in a heartbeat, Anju tells Sudha to go back to Chaterjee's household.

"Just in case what?" I want her to say it. I need her to say it.

"Just in case I decided not to go back." Sudha's voice is stronger now. I think she needed to hear herself say it too. (Divakaruni 1999:240)

It can be assumed from the quotes above that although they are in separated countries, Anju completely understand Sudha's emotions. She can sense her sister's is very distressed and she tries to calm her down, just like their old times. Elizabeth Abel, noted in *(E) Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women* from Helen Deutsch in *The Psychology of Women* (New York: Gruine & Stratton, 1994), vol. 1, one of the factor that gives women strength to grow mature is mutual validation: "In the safe harbor of each other and concentrate on their own perception of things" (p. 47) (Abel, 1981). Anju and Sudha have been through a lot difficult times together since they were still little girls and they grow stronger because they have each other, this time is no different even they are apart in different contries.

"One step at a time,...things will work out somehow, you'll see. I'll call you in Calcuta." (Divakaruni 1999:240)

Anju gives Sudha sense of comfort that she needs the most. The affirmation from Anju is needed for Sudha to be stronger in the dark time.

Sudha's return as expected gives such an astonishment to Gouri Ma, Aunt Pishi, but then they give whole support for Sudha and infant in her womb. The most shocking is the reaction of her own mother which makes everyone bewildered, "I told her to put grit her teeth and put up with it,..... Now what'll we tell our relatives?" (Divakaruni 1999:244). Aunt Pishi, a widowed woman, surprisingly fully support Sudha, a married woman run away from home, to keep her baby girl alive. And after all, in the end, everyone including Nalini, Sudha's mother, support Sudha's decision for keeping her baby girl. She decided to face the consequence as her in-law sent the divorce letter and she will be a divorcee. As Dr.Ratna Rao writes in her journal *Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels From The Perspective of Feminist Theories*, all of those personal transformations of women characters take the final part of the plot to an ending which is good and the best for everyone" (Rao, 2016).

Meanwhile in America, Anju is rapidly thinking of ideas for her sister. She feels responsible for she thought that she is the one who forced Sudha to jump into despair. "Did I make the wrong decision for Sudha, misled by my American-feminist notions of right and wrong?" (Divakaruni 1999:250). This passage shows how genuinely concern Anju is for her sister and her baby. Given the feeling of helplessness because she is far away from her family in India, she is prone to the depression.

According to Dieu Hack-Polay in his journal *When Home Isn't Home – A Study of Homesickness and Coping Strategies among Migrant Workers and Expatriates* said most studies of homesickness can be generalised in the cognitive and behavioural symptoms of homesickness are likely to lead to emotional problems such as low mood, lack of security, loneliness, nervousness, lack of control and depression. It is topped by increasing contacts with friends and family (Hack-polay, 2012). In Anju's case, she ease the homesickness by calling Sudha and the mothers more often. However, the uneasiness feelings towards Sudha drives Anju deeper into depression. It leads her to have a determination to strengthen Sudha's little family life. She wants to give Sudha and her baby girl better live. She willing to bring them to America, which she hopes that Sudha will pursue her childhood dream as a boutique owner. Anju then secretly works in her college library as an assistant without telling her husband, Sunil. Her pay solely will be used for Sudha's and her baby, Dayita, to settled in America.

Anju works her body and mind restlessly resulting her worsen the health condition of her and baby boy in her womb. Until one day, the gushing red running down her legs. She has lost her baby. It is such a really devastating and the most heart-wrenching tragedy that ever happen to her. Her miscarriage news does not immediately sent to Sudha. For more than a month, the letters nor the calls from Anju does not come. The mothers tend to avoid the topic of Anju's sudden

dissappearance. When Sudha calls Anju in the middle of the night in America, it is Sunil who answer it.

Sudha demands to put the phone to Anju's ear and she begins the story of *The Queen of Swords*, the story about a vulnerable queen who about to get killed by the kingdom for conceiving a girl. She runs away with a sudden sword which magically appear in her hands. She has nowhere to hide and when she reached the ocean edge, suddenly a rainbow extended all the way from the other side of the earth to her helpless self. Turns out, the queen had forgotten that she had a twin sister who lived in the land across the ocean. And her sister pulled her to across the ocean, over the gaping jaws of sea monsters, to the safety. It is their made up story they create when they still kids. The story is something private between them, not even mothers know it. After the story ends, Anju begin to open up to Sudha. Even the mothers amazed on how Sudha makes Anju able to talk after such a long time. It is their special bonding that melting the hardened heart.

Anju is crying now. "Oh, Sudha," she says between sobs, "I need you. I need you so much. I'm straved of you. I was trying so hard to get the money for your ticket, but I messed everything up." (Divakaruni 1999:288)

The passage above shows how emotionally wounded Anju is. And the one who able to soothe her condition is Sudha. Being in America with her longing for her homeland country, added by her unstable emotional state, makes Anju wailing and begging Sudha to go to America. Sudha is agonized, she does not know Anju is getting money for her and it leads to her unfortunate miscarriage. It breaks Sudha's heart knowing Anju sacrifices so much for her.

After Dayita born the challenge comes into Sudha again. Ashok proposes her for the second time, as the first one is rejected because he said he cannot accept her daughter. This time Ashok says that he wants to learn to love Dayita as well. At first, Sudha tempted because he is the first man she loves so much.

Then I remember Anju. Anju waiting so desperately, Anju exercising and eating spinach each day and learning how to smile again. Anju, who has already started to clean her apartment in anticipation of my tourist visa, which is due to arrive any week now. Anju, whose father would not be dead except for my father. Whose some would not be dead, perhaps, except for –

"Ashok," I say, I close my eyes tight, dizzy with déjà vu. Too late, too late. All my life, the timing of things has been off. "I'm sorry —" (Divakaruni 1999:294)

From the excerpt above, it can be conclude that Sudha is guilty for Anju. She feels that she must be responsible for everything that happen to Anju. Knowing the fact from Pishi

that Anju's father died because following her dad's dangerous ruby quest is already anguish her, Anju's baby boy died because Sudha is the reason why she works so hard, and now if she left her alone and choose Ashok, she cannot imagine Anju has to bear the grief all by herself. Sudha knows the final decision she choose. She is going for Anju and for Dayita, but most of all she going for herself. In her last letter Anju even write about her plans about starting a clothes boutique together. It shows how they want to build a future by themselves, women, out of their own wits, their own hands. A future where they can lean on each other's shoulders in a happy and bad times together.

## CONCLUSION

*Sister of My Heart* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a novel which gives deep understanding about female bonding. This assumption comes up as the female characters such as Anju, Sudha, Gouri Ma, Pishi and Nalini supporting each other in their lives. But the strongest bond shows in the novel is between Anju and Sudha. Female bonding is qualify as one branch of feminist survival strategy that is very important in women's lives. This chapter serves the answers of both statements of the problems in chapter I; 1) How is female bonding of Anju and Sudha depicted in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*? and 2) How does the impact of female bonding affect Anju's diasporic life and Sudha's domestic life? Based on the previous chapter, there are two points that can be concluded in this study.

The first one is focuses on the depiction of female bonding of Anju and Sudha. They are cousins who grow up together in a household of Chaterjee's women without father figures. Since they are babies, they seemingly have strong connection. Anju even magically calls Sudha out to the world when she is still feel comforted inside her mother's womb. The bonding begin when they are babies, going through rebellious phase as teenagers, until when they become the wives for other families. Their characteristics are opposite, as it is fitted them best. They loving each other dearly as sisters, Sudha even sacrifice her first love as when she hears Anju's future in-law may cancel her marriage when they hear scandal on Chaterjee's family. Because at that time, Sudha is really want to elope with Ashok and hearing that, she throw everything and has to accept the bitter marriage the family has arranged for her. Another prove of their bonding is when Anju feels jealous of Sudha's beautifulnes that attracts her husband, Sunil, and their bonding fall apart. Even though momentarily their connection falters, they are able to find their way back to each other again when Anju going to go to America to follow Sunil.

The second one, the study concerns with the impact of female bonding on Anju's diasporic life in America and

Sudha's domestic life in India. Anju change of culture in the new country makes her feel liberated as she able to go to collage like she always want before and she also can sut her hair short. Something that still make people turn to look on her twice. But at the same time, she feels lonely and longing for her family in India. Meanwhile, Sudha faces hardships because of her mean mother in-law and her uncomfotableness being with her husband, Ramesh, for she is not in love with him. Anju's homesick and Sudha's difficulties makes them crave for each other's warmth hearts. They solved that problem by exchange letters and communicate throuh phones. Even Sudha still calls Anju as she needs affirmation for keeping the daughter, when her mother in-law told to abort. Having such a strong bonding since babies makes Anju pondering really hard on how to ease Sudha's problems. Anju works hard as the assistant in her college library secretly. This leads to her miscarriage.

Having knowing this makes Sudha's world curmbling too. She knows how much her baby must meant to Anju. And knowing the reason of Anju's work too hard is because she wants to buy tickets for Sudha and also the money for her to settle in America, makes her remorsefully guilty. This misfortunate once again establish sacrifice for Sudha. She rejected Ashok's marriage proposal and decided to go to America, where Anju needs her the most. Their bonding create an invincible strength needed for each other to conquer the world in their lives. They able to put aside the jealousy feelings, the insecure feelings, and even sacrificing the happiness of love in order to be there for each other. This shows how much power women can share and gain from one to another.

Furthermore, if other reseacrchers interested in the topic of female bonding and relationship of Anju and Sudha, it is suggested to read the sequel of *Sister of My Heart*, *The Vine Desire*. It is also suggested for the future researchers to look for other novels with the same topic to enlarge the understanding of female bonding.

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