

CULTURE STUDIES IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *DOORS*

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Abstract

Culture is a way of life closely linked with life. Culture is made of traditions, beliefs, and ways of life from the most spiritual to the most material. Preserving culture is the prestige of all countries. There comes an instance when one has to search for their identity in a cross-cultural environment. The paper with the support of the story "Doors" by Chitra Banerjee explains how the protagonist struggles for creating her own identity. Culture is the quality and acquaintance of a particular set of people, encircling religion, social habits, cuisine, arts, and music. Chitra Banerjee has probed the theme of human relationships more minutely and more skillfully in "Doors" where she focuses on alienation and communication in married life. It is a perfect blend of two cultures Western and Indian. Hence, it has a vague notion that things are not alright between the American- Indian couple's home front as well. Thus the extent of cultural shock depends on the individual's susceptibility.

Keywords: studies, culture, relationships, individual etc

The paper is an attempt to review "Doors" in the backdrop of cultural identity. People of a country have the pride to reveal their own cultural identity wherever they go. Her novels portray the possibility of establishing a bicultural identity. The paper with the support of the story "Doors" by Chitra Banerjee explains how the protagonist struggles for creating her own identity. Culture is the quality and acquaintance of a particular set of people, encircling religion, social habits, cuisine, arts, and music. Cultural studies were developed by British Academics and followed by many scholars in a variety of fields in the world.

Culture Studies is devoted to understanding the process through which societies and the diverse groups within them come to terms with history, community life, and the challenges of the future. Culture is a way of life closely linked with life. Literature is a profound way to record man's culture through the fictionalized events and characters and passed down the same in an accessible way to others and thereby it paves the way for connecting individuals with larger truths. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian American writer is one of the foremost writers of diasporic literature. She is an award-winning author, poet, activist, and teacher. Her books have been translated into twenty-nine languages. She

continued her education in the field of English and received a Doctorate from the University of California.

Chitra Banerjee is a versatile writer of contemporary Indian English Literature. Her novels are beautifully written like the smooth floor of a crystal clear river reflecting her cool memories of the homeland. Settled abroad, Chitra explores the nuances of her native culture in her unique way. She has received accolades worldwide for the sensitive and witty handling of her simple day-to-day concepts, characters, and locations. Her novels are replenished with not only the physical aspects of an Indian home such as design, construction, and use of domestic space but also its associated religious, social, and cultural sentiments and practices and also illustrate how these are adopted and reworked by her protagonists. Similarly, by the way of depicting domestic life, Chitra Banerjee hints at the gender roles and social relations in the household and thereby provides new perspectives on the theoretical models of western and Indian domesticity.

Her work primarily addresses issues related to cross-cultural complexities of self-identity, family relationships, community values, and experiences of Indian and Indian-American women living in a multicultural world. Chitra moved to Sunnyvale, California in 1989. She believed in dissolving these – cross-cultural boundaries. She became the founder – member and President of MAIRI, an organization in the San Francisco area that works for South –Asian women in abusive situations. Chitra maintains her affection for her cultural backgrounds, visiting India fairly regularly. She has an obsession with the common plight of immigrants. She chooses Indian women's modern melodies of exile, loneliness, bewilderment, dislocation, and loss of identity in an alien universe for imaginative expressions in her poetry and fiction.

Chitra Banerjee has probed the theme of human relationships more minutely and skillfully in "Doors" where she focuses on alienation and communication in married life. "Doors" is from the "Arranged marriage" anthology which is a short story collection by Indian Diasporic writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The woman character who is called American-Born –Confused - Desis, ABCD by her relatives is Preeti of the short story "Doors". Preeti, the protagonist of the story has grown up in America since the age of twelve. Much against the wishes of her mother, she wants to marry Deepak, who is straight out of India. Deepak's friends too tried to warn him against marrying Preeti as they feel she belongs to what they refer to as "American-Born-Confused-Desis". Despite all speculations and Preeti's penchant for closed doors, Deepak is in love with this exotic creature Indian and yet not Indian.

Deepak and Preeti lived in California. Deepak's cousin Raj from India comes to Berkeley to stay with them while he does his Master's degree there. The men carry the buddy-buddy thing too far and encroach upon Preeti's privacy. Raj especially is a lout and a boor as

well as boar but Deepak is delighted to have him in the house and they relive their school days and they look at endless videos of Kishore Kumar's songs. Much to Preeti's chagrin, her private space is violated one day when her bedroom door is thrown open by Raj who walks into share a piece of good news. She doesn't like any intruders into her privacy. There is no scope for any relationships in her absolutely planned life. The interplay of emotions between the opposing temperaments becomes a major ground for their marital conflict.

Preeti loses her peace of mind and tranquility when Raj from India becomes a long-term house guest. Raj's presence brings out the Indianness in Deepak that has lain dormant since he has come to America with Preeti. Not only thus he acquires a long-lost taste for Bollywood films but his accent becomes significantly more Indian and his duty as a host leads him to allow Raj's welfare to take precedence over his wife's. Deepak and Preeti discover that they have opposed concepts of space. She bursts out at Raj when he enters his bedroom to tell her good news without even knocking on the door. Deepak's male bonding with his friend has relegated her to a highly American secondary position, where her duty to her guest must override any inconvenience suffered because of extra chores or distaste at Raj's irritating habits.

When Preeti announces that she is moving in with her friend Cathy hoping that this temporary separation will help them both to straighten things out, the reaction shown by Deepak cries out in horror. Preeti begins to doubt her decision and realizes the cultural disparity between the two of them. Although Deepak eventually requests Raj to leave their house as Preeti is uncomfortable in his presence, Preeti and Deepak's relationship remains strained. A Door deep inside her heart closes as the reality of their cultural differences dawns upon her.

Thus the extent of cultural shock depends on the individual's susceptibility. Preeti dreams of unadulterated happiness, but it is just an illusion. Her mother's warnings become true when Deepak started enjoying Indian snacks and movies and neglects the value of privacy and closed doors. Thus even a love match between an Indian born and an Indian – American does not work out because of the mismatched values. Preeti's mother has foreseen that a marriage between a young woman raised in the individualistic Society of America and a young man born and brought up in India will not work out. Preeti is a modern woman rooted in tradition, whereas her husband, Deepak is a traditionalist rooted in age-old customs. Preeti realizes that by insisting on the shutting of the doors, she is shutting herself even from her husband.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is another woman writer of the first generation who brilliantly portrays gender in its vivid. The novelist suggests that the world would be a safer and happier place to live in if men heed to the councils of women. Her female protagonists are

a memorable and real representation of Diasporic Indian Women. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni creates the world of women both out of memory and experiences of home and abroad. Her gender delineations are strong, powerful, and true to life which reveals the Feminist consciousness of the writer.

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