

THE STUDY OF PRIVACY, SPACE AND SUFFOCATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE SHORT STORY 'DOORS' FROM CHITRA BANERJEE'S *ARRANGED MARRIAGE*

SHRIPAD ARUN JOSHI

Abstract: One of the favorite stories from *Arranged Marriage* is 'Doors'. It is all about privacy, space and 'being one's own'. There are three major characters in the story: Preeti, her husband Deepak and Deepak's friend Raj. Deepak and Preeti do very well in their marriage. They enjoy marriage life but the situation gets worst when Raj comes to live with them. Preeti gets disturb because of the interference of Raj in their life. She disturbs so much that at some point, she decides to leave home.

The Present research paper underscores the necessity of privacy and space. The title 'Doors' itself is significant in relation to it. In addition to cultural conflict, it is important to study psychological disturbances and conflicts in the said short story. Chitra Banarjee analyses psyche of many disturbed migrated women through the 'Doors' with the help of Preeti's character. The present paper throws light on the suffocation of these immigrants. It analyzes Preeti, the main character, from various perspectives and tries to give voice to her suffocation.

Key Words: privacy, space, conflicts

Introduction: The Present research paper underscores necessity of privacy and space. The title of the short story 'Doors' itself is significant in relation to it. In addition to cultural conflict, it is important to study psychological disturbances and conflicts in the said short story. Chitra Banerjee analyses psyche of many disturbed migrated women through the 'Doors' with the help of Preeti's character. The present paper throws light on the suffocation of many immigrants like Preeti. The paper analyzes Preeti, the main character, from various perspectives and tries to give voice to her suffocation.

'Doors', the eighth story in compilation is about the burden of an extended family. It deals with Deepak and Preeti's marriage and getting affected eventually with the arrival of Raj, Deepak's cousin. Preeti deals with the interference of Raj in her privacy 'the doors' closed whereas Deepak with open 'doors'. Raj's habit of keep the doors open causes a tussle between couple.

Preeti, being born and brought up in U.S. has come to love the western idea of privacy. She faces a dilemma when her husband's cousin wants to live with them. She expresses her discontent with the situation and emerges to be little decisive. It is her assertive attempt to erase her husband's view of a traditional Indian wife. She stands completely against typical Indian arranged marriages, as she knows that Indian and America stand for different values. In Indians families, 'I' is not a concern, but in America, privacy is a part of life. Her mother tells that the Indian concept of family is an old concept and that is why she says that Deepak is a person with pre - historical values. However, to begin with Preeti and Deepak are '*happily married*'. They consider that their marriage to be based on mutual esteem, it is

something more than the traditional marriage, but ultimately this proves to be a misconception. Raj a cousin from India comes to stay with them. Deepak is quite happy with Raj. However, their socialization is a burden for Preeti as she faces a problem of privacy and space. She is not able to understand the concept of joint family and the extended family values that an Indian does. Being completely American in her style she stands against the typical Indian marriages without having lack of privacy. She is much used to the American ideas of privacy. Here occurs the conflict is between "I" and "WE". Preeti is not able to and does not even try to appreciate the difference between the two cultures. On the other hand, Raj is also not able to understand the value of privacy that Preeti desires in their marriage. The *close - door* system of America is like a riddle to Raj, as he has never seen any door being shut in a traditional Indian family. In due course, Preeti decides to depart from Raj and the door finally is clicked shut. In an inter-country marriage when values change, a person has to adapt to new values. However, the marriages are predestined to fail when this flexibility is not there. In this short story, Preeti and Deepak are not able to recognize the value of flexibility, hence they close their doors. Little more understanding of each other's value would have led to better appreciation, esteem, and love, but that remains a far possibility.

As stated earlier, it is all about privacy and space and 'being one's own'. The opening sentence of the story itself reveals it. "IT ALL STATRED WHEN RAJ CAME TO LIVE WITH THEM" (P.183). It should be noted down that the opening sentence is in the capital letter highlights problems that has occurred in Preeti's married life.

Two different cultures are focused in the beginning of the story. The strong debate between Preeti and her

mother about Preeti's marriage stresses on different culture and speaks about inevitable cultural conflicts, disturbances and so on. Preeti's mother's remark is very noteworthy about Preeti's marriage. When Preeti decides to marry Deepak, her mother expresses a doubt about its being successful. The reason behind it is that Deepak is from India and Preeti loves to live in the U.S. since she was twelve years old. Her mother's utterance,

"Here you are, living in the U.S. since you were twelve. And Deepak- He is straight out of India. Just because you took a few classes together at the University and you liked how he talks, doesn't mean that you can live with him". (P.183) This utterance ultimately highlights difference between two cultures.

Interestingly, as Preeti's Mother criticizes Indian culture in the same way, Deepak's friends criticize western culture. This also needs to take into account that Deepak's friends are also worried about his decision of marrying American Woman, i.e. Preeti. They are seen saying:

"Yaar, are you sure you are doing the right thing? " "You know how these American Women are always bossing you all, always thinking about themselves..." (P.185)

Even one of the friends quips another friend by saying, "It's no wonder we call them ABCD'S- American Born confused Desis..." (P.185)

The inevitability of the cross-cultural boundaries and conflicts too is made intense and certain in the concerned story. One can notice Indians' view towards Americans through these observations. Even the word 'American' has been stressed in the conversation. At the same time, it is also a fact that American's (immigrants) views towards India are stated by the mouth of Preeti's mother. It is very hard for everyone to assimilate in another culture. The idea of marrying with 'American' women seems quite dangerous to Deepak's friend. According to them, these American Women love privacy and space. They think of about themselves only. These women are perceived as self-centered and dominant. This psychological / mental block about immigrants or

ABCD's stresses cultural conflicts between Americans and Indians.

The patriarchal attitude is highlighted with the remarks of Deepak's friend. One of the friends of Deepak declares that he would go for an arranged marriage from back home any day. "... a pretty young girl from my parents/ village, not too much educated, brought up to treat a man right and not talk back..." (P.185)

The crux of the story is of love for privacy. It is shown with the image of 'door'. The actual problem in the house of Preeti and Deepak occurs when Raj leaves the door ajar. The concept of doors doesn't exist in Raj's universe and he ignores their physical reality. He leaves his own bedroom door wide open so that the honest rumble of his snores assaults Preeti on her way to the bathroom every morning. It results into Preeti's disturbances. Preeti gets so much disturbed over the period of time. She shares this problem to her friend, Cathy. It becomes so unbearable to Preeti that she reacts one day, "I can't! Deepak would be terribly upset. It has to do with hospitality and losing face; I guess it's a cultural thing" (P. 194). It reflects Preeti's being torn between two cultures. She cannot insult Raj nor convince Deepak. She comes to know about Indian culture. Indians have tradition to treat guest as God. It goes like this in India 'Attithi Devo Bhavo' means Guest is like God. Guests are treated like God. This cultural background does not allow Preeti to maintain her privacy. Preeti figures out it that Deepak is also changes day by day. It results into Preeti's big depression. She notices Deepak's accent becoming a lot more Indian.

Conclusion: To conclude, it can be said that the privacy, space and time matters a lot to westerners whereas Indians are fond of openness. This cross cultural etiquettes and manners lead to ruined life of Deepak and Preeti's life. This happens only because of cross cultural conflicts. However, it is also a ray of hope that Preeti's depression burst out at some point of time and she rebels against unfavorable circumstances. Chitra Banerjee portrays suffocation of Preeti and at the same time she gives voice to the Preeti's suffocation in the 'Doors'.

References

1. Banerjee, Chitra. *Arranged Marriage*, Black Swan Edition, 1997.
2. Mishra, Vijay. *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora, Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, London: Routledge, 2007.
3. Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves" in Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg Ed.
4. *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996: 115.
5. Pranjape, Makarand. (2001). In- *Diasporas: Theories, Histories, Texts*. New Delhi: Indialog Publication Pvt. Ltd.
6. <http://www.newmanpublication.com/issue/04%20Neelam%20Mulchandani.pdf>
7. <http://www.the-criterion.com/V5/n2/Girase.pdf>

Shripad Arun Joshi, Assistant Professor of English
Clara's College of Commerce, Andheri