

## I. Amy Tan and Bi-Culturalism

Amy Ruth Tan is an immigrant Chinese origin writer, whose work often centers on the way that the dialogic nature of story functions either to create or to bridge gaps between bi-culture, bilingual immigrant mothers and their Americanized second generation daughters. The vary patterns of tension in her text result in resistance mode of narration. Throughout her novels Tan's characters emphasize that their immigration to the United States after World War Second caused an erosion or loss of their cultural memories. Throughout her text, Chinese –born mothers attempt to perpetuate these cultural memories in the stories told to their American born daughters but often with mixed results. For the daughters talk-stories do not represent a stable text but depend solely on the mothers' memories. Thus, the mothers' continual revision of their stories often signals an erasure or loss of China as referent for the American-born listeners. Throughout Tan's novels, talk stories promotes multiple levels of misunderstanding between both Chinese-speaking mothers and English speaking daughters and between persons who speak different Chinese dialects. Mothers who immigrate from China can speak English language, haven't wholly mastered on it. In these text, they don't tell what happened but attempt to depict the events how and why occurs. By minutely inspecting this novel, we can find, characters clearly divided into two halves: represent of old Chinese culture by old generation and represent of new and modern American culture by new generation. Because of their distinct origin which evolved different nature on characters that frequently tensioned whole novel. Amy Tan's second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), presents the comic descriptions of late twentieth century cultural and generational clashes in the United States sit uneasily with the harrowing evocations of

the repercussions of World War Second in China. The central character of the novel is Winnie whose situation is often problematic but inextricable; relationship with her mother in particular and family members in general propels the story live and the plot to such a pass that there arises serious disputes about the very possibility of a traditional family migrating to and surviving in a foreign, much more developed and modern society.

Brief biographical information of the author helps us to grasp the context in which the work was produced. Amy Ruth Tan was born in Oakland, California, on February 19, 1952 the middle child (and only daughter) of John Yuennan and Daisy Tu Ching Tan, who had emigrated from china. Her father was an electrical engineer in China, but he becomes a minister in the United States. When she was nineteen, she lost her father and elder brother in a matter of a month. Daisy took the family to Switzerland and enrolled her children in schools there, but she returned to California in 1968. Tan's parents hoped she would become a physician and concert pianist. She began a premedical course of study but switched to English and linguistics, much to her mother's dismay. Then she started up her career as a language development consultant for disabled children and a freelance writer. But she got dissatisfied children and a freelance writer. But she didn't get any satisfaction in her job and took up jazz piano and writing fiction instead. Her first published story *The Rules of The Games* got her entrance into the squaw valley community of writers in 1985, and the story also become a part of her first novel *The Joy Luck Club* in 1989. The novel explains the complicated relationship between the four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American born daughters, along the same line come her second famed novel *The Kitchen God's Wife* depicting the strained and complicated but finally settled relationship between mother and her daughter. Her third novel *The Hundred Secret*

*Sense* (1995) is centered on the sisterhood relationship between two half sisters Kwan and Olivia. Then Tan published her fifth novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* which is a sort of biography of her mother. Thus, as an American novelist of Chinese decent, she takes much interest on the theme of life stories of Chinese woman who are somehow or other affected by the fact of their cultural displacement and dislocation, consequently conflict with new generation. In this regard, some critics have underlined the importance of the novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* in terms of its historicity. The critic Bella Adams mentions, "Specially, the section narrated by Jiang Welli (known as Willie Louie), this novel is valuable because in responding a particular period of china history, namely Japan's occupation of china during the 1930s and 1940s as well as the rape of Nanking" (9). Thus, Bella Adams contends, both vividly depiction of Chinese circumstances during the 1930s and as well the national suffering of China by the Japanese invasion. Similarly Yuan Yuan argues that the novel is a china narrative witch recounts the Japanese invasion with personal touch and minuteness:

The China narrative is based on Winnie's constant painful experiences in china. In fact the pain and suffering that are central to Winnie's recollection invite repression, rather than recall. Her China narrative is subject to constant postponement and erasure to conceal the unspeakable experience and repressed memory. Winnie's experience of China is transfigured into a discourse of repression and recollection of China experiences is translated into a loss narrative. (292)

Within the American contact, mothers' recollections of China experiences demonstrate more loss of memory than recall of the past. Forgetting paradoxically becomes the key to recollection. Therefore, the cross-cultural hermeneutics of China

is conducted within that domestic space, between two generations in general and between the Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters in specific. As products of different cultures and histories, mother and daughters abide by different cultural values and possess different modes of interpretation, which creates cultural conflict in Tan's novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*.

Michelle Nealy argues that the novel is about the secret relationship of mother and daughter. He says:

One family and two big secrets snared between a mother and daughter. Both secrets will manage to rescue the family's past and future. As the mother is forced by Helen, another relative, to tell her daughter about her life story of growing up in China against the back drop of world war second the American born daughter pearl must reflect on her own live and behaviour. (22)

The mother and daughter are finally brought to admit their secrets with each other this indicate the strengthening of bonds between them. Cheng Sarlet comments:

In a having way, tan has also successfully taken on her mother's voice in the kitchen god's wife or at least, the voice of someone of her mother's generation, who lived though the tumultuous period of history her mother did [. . .] tan shows us that a life can encompass all that grief, imperfection, ambiguity and still add up to triumph of the spirit, of the human soul to endure, to show compassion and to hold past to dreams. (15)

So, Cheng notes the historical elements in the novel which make it a worthwhile reading.

Viewing the western feminism and ethnic identity Shirley Geak-Lin Lin remarks, “*The Kitchen God’s Wife* is not the novel of apparent content, its third world materials, but its afflictive grid, the insertion of American ideological position, including those of western feminism, ethnic identity, and class that affect its reception” (302).

Similarly, commenting on the narrative perspective of the novel, Lisa M.S. Dunick remarks, “Tan’s use of dialogic nature of talk-story functions either to create or to bridge gaps between bi-cultural, bi-lingual immigrant mother and their Americanized second-generation daughters” (1). Dunick further remarks:

Through out Tan’s novels, talk-story promotes multiple levels of misunderstanding between both Chinese speaking mothers and English –speaking daughters and between persons who speak different Chinese dialects. As a linguistic strategy, talk – story in Tan’s novels often fails to convey clearly the speaker’s message to her audience. (1)

The manner of storytelling in Tan’s novel, *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, talk-story identifies the patterns of tension that result from the conflict between the oral storytelling of Chinese mother, Winnie, identified as talk-story and her American daughter Pearl’s initial resistance to and eventual acceptance of that mode of narration. The mode of narration also creates the tension between Chinese born mother Winnie and her Americanized daughter, Pearl.

During the invasion in China during the 1930s and the 1940s, the Japanese imperialism had brought different hardships and difficulties to the life of Chinese people which gives the horrible picture of Japanese brutal attack on China. In a way Japanese brutality to China and Wen Fu’s brutality to Winnie Louie go along with the

same level of intensity, it shows the parallelism between the Chinese patriarchy and the Japanese imperialism.

The critics have dictomaized the novel on various spectrums prospective. However, the present study merely focus on the cultural conflict presented in the novel is because of bi-cultural, bi-lingual immigrant mother, Winnie and her Americanized second generation daughter Pearl. *The Kitchen God's Wife* centers around the love and antagonism between Chinese immigrant mother and her Americanized daughter. In real life, Tan and her mother experienced similar emotional turmoil. Daisy Tan had high expectations for her daughter. Amy Tan recalls that as a child she was expected grow up to be a neurosurgeon by profession with the “hobby” of concert pianist. She also remembers her mother’s disappointment when she changed her undergraduate major from premed to English.

In her novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan’s primary concern is to reveal the tension that is engendered in any mother-daughter relationship, but especially between first generation American daughters and their immigrant Chinese mothers. Illustrating the problematic mother-daughter and sisterly relationship, Tan focuses on generational and cultural conflict between the China-born mother Winnie’s inner turmoil with her American-born daughter Pearl’s trepidation. Winnie’s life is recounted backwards, from her present existence in contemporary San Francisco to her beginnings in the old China before the Second World War, for the understanding of her daughter Pearl.

The mothers in Amy Tan’s novels are Chinese sojourners in America where ways of thinking and doings are thoroughly Chinese in spite of their many years of American residency. To the daughter who have their roots in America and who have been cultivated with ideals of freedom democracy “individualism and instrumental

reason” in one hand stand for the new and innovative while the Chinese surrogate mothers on the other hand stand for the past, the old, the outdated, the mysterious and sometimes the superstitious. Thus, the cultural conflict exists by the interaction and the revelation of secrets between Chinese immigrant mother Winnie and her American-born daughter Pearl, who keep their own secrets from each other for fear that the plain fact would deteriorate their relationship or bring harm to their life.

Instead of out-pairs of mothers and daughters, however, Tan concentrates on the one mother and daughter, Winnie Louie and Pearl, with Pearl’s present-day narrative providing for her mothers story telling. Yet the novel is more than a traditional, framed narrative. It appears to be dialogic, with two alternating narrative voices and hints towards possibility of communication. It opens with Tan’s familiar theme of mother-daughter conflict, cause behind it with cultural differences. At first Pearl appears reluctant to travel to China town in San Francisco to visit her family, especially her mother, whom she calls, "a Chinese version of Freud, or worse" (29 ). As her first person narrative un-folds, the reader learns that Pearl, who is suffering from multiple sclerosis and could soon become paralyzed, feels guilty for not telling her mother her secrete. When she visits her mother, Winnie Louie unexpectedly reveals her other identity as Jaing Willi in China. In what appears to be a story telling marathon, Winnie discloses a series of surprises about her past. She was daughter of a Shanghai tycoon and his number-two wife, who resisted the fate of concubine and disappeared when Willi was six. To avoid family on an island, and at eighteen she married a scheming brute who abused her physically and mentally. After suffering the loss of her three children during the Sino –Japanese war, she fell in love with a Chinese American soldier and tried to elope with him, but she was tried for “stealing” her husband’s son and property and imprisoned for two years. She escaped china on

the last flight from Shanghai before the communist takeover and started her American life.

The most shocking secret of the mother's past, however, is revealed as an afterthought. She tells Pearl that she is most likely the daughter of Winnie's sadistic first husband, Wen Fu, who raped Winnie just before her escape from China. After her mother's confession, Pearl finally feels free to talk about her medical condition. This talk around the kitchen table, a traditional place for female communication, becomes a ritual of secret sharing that bridge generations. Like *The Joy of Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife* is the fictionalized life story of Daisy Tan.

After success of her first novel, Tan felt pressured by the fear that her second book would not be as good, or as well received, as first. At first she tried to write something completely different from *The Joy Luck Club*, but after several false starts she again turned to her mother for inspiration. Having often complained that she had to tell every acquaintance that she was not the model for the mother in *The Joy Luck Club*, Daisy Tan wanted her true story told. In 1989, when she learned that her first husband had died, the past broke free and Daisy started telling her story. Her daughter videotaped her mother's story telling and transformed it into a novel. Thus *The Kitchen God's Wife* is virtually collaboration by Daisy and Amy. "My mother wanted me to write this book about her", Tan told Patti Doten in 1991. She not only wanted to give me her story but I think she was looking for a way to release the pain and the anger over "that bad man". Although many details are changed, the plot of *The Kitchen God's Wife* closely corresponds to the outlines of Daisy's life in China before the Sino-Japanese war until she immigrated to the United States: "Every traditional Chinese woman, who have been educated worship male oppressors such as the



kitchen god, whose story is a mythological parallel to that of Winnie's abusive first husband, who lives to an old age and dies with honor.

Tan regards *The Kitchen God's* story as a perfect metaphor for unquestioned governing myths, or the master plot, as Toni Morrison would term it. As Winnie says in novel: I was like that wife of Kitchen God. Nobody worshipped her either. He got all the excused. He got all the credit. She was forgotten. Winnie's denial of the kitchen god and her creation of new goddess embody Tan's textual "revenge" for oppressed Chinese woman. Sorrow-free is also a translation of the name of Winnie's still-born daughter, Mochou, whose spirit Winnie symbolically resurrects in her reconciliation with Pearl. The final message of the novel, therefore, is one of forgiveness and hope, which leads to a "sorrow free" life. Besides replacing a patriarchal god with a female deity, Tan also supplants the patriarchal family structure with the circle of sisterhood. The most significant example of sisterhood is the commune of runaway wife, "an underground hiding place, filled with women and children". The mother thinks from her horrible marriage to her children dying, to being in jail, to escaping right before their valuation in 1949. With her writing, moreover, Tan tried to uncover the reasons behind her mother's extraordinary enduring a terrible first marriage that lasted twelve years, and she come to understand the oppressive patriarchal myths under which Chinese woman have been governed for thousands of years myths that had taught Daisy to suffer silently. The spirit of the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen square, Beijing, also find its way into tan's writing, as she attempts to capture the spirit of the students' resistance and to comprehend "what it is like to live a life of repression and to understand the fear that one has, and what you have to do to rise above that fear". *The Kitchen God's Wife* is not only a fictionalized biography but also an effort to rewrite myth-logy. Amy Tan

deliberately revises Chinese mythology, as in her creation of the new goddess lady sorrow free.

In telling the story of kitchen god, Tan exposes the poignant irony in the old myth: A wife abuser was apotheosized as a household deity and the guardian of kitchens, the space traditionally assigned to women. She also reveals the internationalization of patriarchal values by tartan of her house once colluded in forcing her daughter to suffer a deal-end marriage in silence and was ‘awakened’ only after her daughter committed suicide which, according to Tan, is only was for a Chinese wife to free herself from such bondage. The commune provides an alternative for a suffering wife, and although it eventually dissolves, the novel clearly carries a message that sisterly support is a sanctuary against oppression and revisionist because female friendship goes against the Confucian patriarchal master plot. Winnie confesses that she used to blame Wen Fu’s mother for her misery:

And perhaps this was wrong of me, to blame another woman for my own miseries. But that was how I was raised never to criticize men or the society they ruled, or Confucius, that awful man who made that society I could blame only other women who were more fearful than I. (257)

Winnie’s statement is a testimony of how internationalization of patriarchal rules turns against woman.

## **II. Culture, Identity and Cultural Conflict**

### **Culture as a Concept**

The term 'culture' which is derived from a Latin 'cultura' which simply means "cultivation" has now undoubtedly acquired rich and extended meanings. Culture is not simple to define since it possesses multitude layers of meanings. Therefore people's ideas have differed and its meaning has taken several directions. During the medieval period 'culture' as cultivation was often associated with the development of religious faith whereas in Roman antiquity it was referred to the cultivation of farming. Similarly, for renaissance humanists, culture was mental cultivation. By the seventeenth century, this process of personal cultivation has extended to the point of superior or refinement. With the help of culture people began to formulate categories separating 'cultured' from "uncultured" or civilized from barbarous or vulgar. Thus, along with time the term acquired new meanings since human beings themselves had created and produced it. Particular people and society acknowledged it in their own perspectives. From the attempts to blend the dual notions of culture, theories of culture in western thought emerged in the late eighteenth century. The dual notions consist of the process of individual development as a refined person and culture as the highest form of human achievement. The usage was almost synonymous with that of the concept of civilization in the twentieth century since civilization also denotes human progress now, civilization is a culture with large and both are traditionally opposed to barbarism. For instance, 'a civilization', according to Samuel Huntington, is the "broadest cultural entity and villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity" (43). Sir Edmund B Tyler, a late nineteenth century anthropologist, regards culture or civilization as the 'complex

whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (64).

But for the philosophers of German enlightenment including Kant, civilization was only the outward decorum of people, their mere forms and customs whereas culture was moral soul, substance and potential of the surface social practices. What the term 'culture' connoted for the German was connoted by the term 'civilization' for the French in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, during this period, culture for the first time becomes synonymous with the objectified result of human creativity that were spread and passed on from generation to generation. The study of culture became largely the total study of objectified creativity of human beings. Culture helps to distinguish man from animal existence. Man became man....when he was able to transmit knowledge, belief, law, morals and customs (Geertz 47). The cultural elements include language, means and objects of subsistence, commerce, all forms of art, science, political and legal system, religion, beliefs, and customs or in short everything that is essential for human beings. Thus, culture is applied to all people. Many regard a culture as a coherent unit, governed by a systematic logic and orderly relationships among its many parts. American anthropologist, Ruth Benedict considers every culture as an "integrate whole" (174), she further says, "[. . .] a culture, like an individual, is more or less a consistent pattern of thought and action. Within each culture, there come into being characteristic purposes not necessarily shared by other types of society" (176).

But paradoxically, all peoples and nations have their own culture. There exists the plurality of cultures, for example, 'high culture' we consider is different from 'popular' or 'mass culture'. There is not a single set of human values. It widely differs according to time and geographical regions. Thus the concept has undoubtedly a

complex history. However, culture can be conceptualized as the patterns of organization, encompassing both the meanings and values that social group creates and with the help of lived practices individuals experience those meanings. Culture, in a way, refers to the customary patterns of behaviors and shared values, beliefs and assumptions found within social groups. According to Stuart Hall, “A [. . .] culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which a people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (121).

‘Culture’ is described in encyclopedia Americana, "as marking out the space of systematic reflection about the process by which people through custom, language and history create themselves" (315). It superficially suggests a particular way of life, whether that of a people, or period or a group. The values, norms, institutions, customs, structures, and modes of thinking bear primary significance in a culture. So it is a kind of historically created system of meaning in terms of which “we give form, order, point and direction to our lives” (Geertz 52).

In contemporary anthropology, the use of the term culture concerns showing the differences among human beings on the basis of customs, behaviours, habits languages and modes of thought. Similarly it has complex history in relation to the concept of race gender and ethnicity. In relation with these issues also, the term ‘culture’ now has attained a new currency of usage. The essence of cultural analysis in anthropology has been to articulate the underlying logics or premises of a culture. But recent researches have somehow altered the long – established concept of culture. Firstly, all cultures are internally differentiated in systematic ways and therefore cannot be studied regarding simply the homogenous totalities governed by uniform logics and principles. Secondly, the controversial issue is that people have claimed

creation of identity and worth of a culture in the flow of historic events of changing social contexts and relationships. The next point is that all cultures are shaped by complex world historical processes so the idea of a culture no longer conforms to a bounded self-contained entity but rather entails a process of historical mixing and diversity. Moreover, cultures now face many challenges, for example, colonization (though in different forms), migrations, Diasporas, cultural contacts, globalization, commercialization etc. all these are responsible for making cultures in complex hybrid forms.

Nevertheless, nobody is explicitly ready to refuse the concept of culture as an organized and integrated system. For instance, Leslie A. White accepts this concept in the context of transmissibility of culture:

Culture is the name of a distinct order, or class, of phenomena [. . .] and in all its aspects, material, social, ideological, is easily and readily transmitted from one individual, one generation, one age, one people, or one region, to another by social mechanisms. Culture is [. . .] a form of social heredity [. . .] a continuum, a supra-biological, extra semantic order of things, and events, that flows down through time from one age to next. (337)

The main concern of cultural studies is to specify the functioning of the social, economic and political forces and power structures of the society, which passes from generation to generation. The rules and regulations systems and beliefs, practices and life style of a one generation in a particular time are internalized by another generation in another time so, culture is transmittable social phenomena.

## **Cultural Pattern**

Culture doubtless is created by individuals and groups as well as interactions between them and the prevailing environment. The interactions occur in them in terms of biological, psychological, and geographical levels. Because of the individual, the group is possible whereas the latter makes it possible to exist in a society. In a society, culture finds a specific position but there exists as a parallel and complementary relationship between them. Regarding this concept, Raymond W. Firth writes very precisely:

[. . .] society is taken as an organized set of individuals with a given way of life; culture is that way of life. If society is taken to be an aggregate of social relations, then culture is the content of those relations. Society emphasizes the human component, the aggregate of people and the relations between them. culture emphasizes the component of accumulated resources, immaterial as well as material, which the people inherit, employ, transmute, add to, and transmit. (27)

This passage of Firth's provides us a sense of pattern, which exists in a culture. The pattern or norms is responsible for forming the network in which social relationship exists. In other terms, individuals in a society are controlled by pattern.

The concept of pattern theory was increasingly developed in the 1950s, and the 60s by several anthropologists including A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn. Concerning the camp process of culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn provide a richer formulation, for instance:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in

artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically divided and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture system may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (181)

The patterns are the qualities of cultural organization, which provide a distinctive individual quality among cultures. Cultural patterns tend to persist as organized bodies custom, though there usually appear some changes, the relationship among individual, group and environment changes. But the pattern itself transforms as the other elements change. So, pattern remains forever though it is dynamic.

### **Cultural Changes in Spatial Environment**

Culture includes the social economic, political forces and power structures of the society, acquired by man as a member of society. It refers to the social circulation of meanings, values, knowledge, belief, custom, and any other capabilities and habits transfer from one generation to another generation or from one society to another. Every human group has its own distinctive culture, but the cultures of human groups is reciprocal contact tend to become more similar because individuals in one group may learn same of their behaviors, languages, beliefs, attitudes and values from individuals in other groups with which they interact.

When two different cultural groups come in contact with each other, their existing norms and values intermingles, and a process of progressive cultural homogenization begins with neighboring groups converging on a common culture, but this process never reaches completion. Axelord's model of homogenization is based on the assumption that the tendency of two neighboring human groups to influence each other and become more culturally similar depends on their current level of cultural similarity. Axelord's states:



Two groups that are already culturally similar are more likely to interact and therefore to become even more culturally similar. On the contrary, two neighboring groups with zero cultural similarity are unlikely to interact and therefore will have no tendency to become more culturally similar. (164)

Two different cultural groups will forever keep their different cultures, and their will never be complete cultural homogenization. Neighboring cultural groups can interact and become more culturally similar even if there is less probability of being a single unified culture.

Interaction and social influence take place with all neighbors whatever the degree of cultural similarity, and still the system doesn't end up with a single homogenous culture. Due to the interaction and social influence with different cultural groups, cultural norms and values change. Spontaneous internal and external changes in culture should favour cultural assimilation. If some people in one culture are in direct contact with other people in another culture, the properties of their culture will become more similar to the more frequent corresponding properties of the cultures around them

When two different regions sharing the same cultural norms and values come into contact, the process of unification increases. Two neighboring sites with different cultures will keep their different cultures – the assimilation rule notwithstanding because the pressure to change due to the single neighboring site that has a different culture tends to be overwhelmed by the conservative pressure exerted by the other, more numerous, neighboring site that share the same culture. In other words, being part of a cultural region decreases a site's changes to changes its culture and be influenced by a neighboring site not belonging to the same cultural region.

Two neighboring sites possessing different cultures will tend to retain their different cultures because the internal homogeneity of the cultural regions to which the two sites belong tends to be an insurmountable obstacle to reciprocal assimilation. But, when two neighboring cultures that are part of two different internally homogenous cultural regions are in contact and the two cultures have zero similarity the situation becomes frozen. There is no further cultural change, and the two cultural regions will never fuse into a single greater, cultural region.

### **Influence of Sibling Relationship in Culture**

Culture is behaviours, attitudes, values, norms, language and system that individual learn from other individuals, especially from older siblings. So, older siblings always feel their responsibilities for the care of their younger siblings. Older siblings are always delegated in caretaking and socialization of younger siblings. Representing two different generations, the older and younger siblings, influence each other. In the interaction between older and younger siblings during sibling caretaking, younger sibling learn various values, knowledge and skills from their sibling caretaker at the same time that cognitive, emotional and social aspects of their personality development are being influenced. Older siblings may serve as models for the younger siblings to imitate and follow the norms and values of the society.

Younger siblings are taught and guided by older siblings with an education mission to socialize and train younger siblings to become functioning members of society older siblings are trained by parents to teach their younger siblings some aspects of personal self-care, skills for doing household or domestic work, and skills for occupational or outside work essential for the survival or maintenance of the family. Thus, children not only learn activities that contribute to their survival, but

practice parental roles and learn the values and activities of their societies (Erwin-Tripp, 1989).

The sibling caretaking system forms a hierarchy where an older sibling may care for a middle sibling, who in turn cares for a younger sibling (Weisner, 1982). Weisner has pointed out that there is considerable variation across families within a society in the extent to which the cultural norms are enacted in practice. Sibling fights, conflicts, and rivalries occur in societies while practicing cultural norms and values instead of the ideal cooperation, sharing, and love.

The concept of solidarity among members of a family involves family structures, frequent contact between individuals, feelings of affectional closeness, consensus of values, attitudes and opinions exchange of services or assistance, and familial norms (Bengtson and Mangen, 1988). Although sibling solidarity can and does develop spontaneously among the siblings in many families in industrialized societies, it is not universal nor does solidarity exist to a high level siblings are more imbued with notions of competition, privacy and independence than in non-industrialized cultures. There are various degrees of deviation within a culture from these normative behaviours, with substantial individual differences in rivalries, jealousies and hostilities, as well as incompetence as teachers and learners.

In both industrialized and non-industrialized societies, older siblings are often delegated responsibilities for the care of their younger siblings. Younger generation always wants to lead independent free life whereas the parents expect to take the major responsibility for socialization. Therefore conflict exists between two generations representing two different cultures. Sibling relationships in industrialized societies tend to be discretionary whereas in non-industrialized societies they are obligatory. Discretionary sibling relationships are based on the siblings desire to

behave in certain ways toward one another or remain involved in one another's life throughout the life course, while obligatory sibling relationships are based on the constraints imposed by cultural norms that siblings should behave in certain ways toward each other.

The cultural norms and values differ from one culture to another so we need to consider the cultural context within which different cultural practices take place. For the better understanding of other cultures, communication and participation with people from another societies or other cultural groups enable us to know more effectively as nations move further along toward a global economy.

### **Culture and Conflict**

While cultural analysis had previously been fixated upon social class differences, by the 1970s age, gender, ethnicity and, later, sexuality came to be seen as playing significant role. As with the study of class cultures, the focus tended to be on identifying the mechanism for social reform and transformation of each particular set of interests. The common belief held by a variety of new (and older) social movements was that culture had been used to shape the desires and conceal our real interest in emancipation. In each case, it was the standpoint of the oppressed which served to validate the analysis. Culture is the product of successful politics.

Gramsci reconstructed Marxism as a philosophy of praxis by arguing that transformation in complex advanced capitalist social formations could only be achieved through the careful prolonged struggles of mass movements. These struggles to achieve hegemony (political, intellectual and moral leaderships) are conducted in politics, culture, education and mass media as well as in the workplace. This approach presumes that history is made through many forms of struggle rather than as a

function of economic laws or the activities of a professional conspiratorial vague and party.

Cultural relations are no longer seen as an ideological mask deceiving the proletariat or pacifying them with the mundane. In stead they are portrayed as a terrain of contestation where social forces struggle. It is this attempt by different classes, alliances and social forces to achieve 'political, intellectual and moral leadership in order to win the active consent which Gramsci termed hegemony (Gramsci 197). It is therefore has a double meaning. Hegemony signifies the attempt to secure dominance but it also highlights the impossibility of complete domination by any class or alliance (for if that were the case then no transformation would be possible), consequently emergence of continuous cultural conflict. Drawing upon Heideggerian phenomenology, Derrida placed such words 'under erasure', including their ambiguous status as inadequate but in the absence of a something better, it remains quite necessary. In particular, he argued that the concept of the 'subject' should be placed under erasure in the same way. Using this critical technique, Derridean discourse analysis destabilizes the key ideas upon which western knowledge is grounded, i.e. in logo-centrism.

To this, we have to engage in the interrogation of texts to establish their organization around certain oppositional categories; such as true /false, rationality /irrationality, objectives/ subject, masculine /feminist and same/ other (Derrida 1973, 1976, 1978).one side of the opposition is positive valued and placed in a privileged position, that is the dominant one. this approach has served well in the study of cultural differences where the distinction between same/ other features heavily. By carefully mapping the relations of equivalence (of sameness) and difference (of otherness), we can identified the ways in which culture differences are constructed

around the ideas of insiders and outsiders and how they can be articulated with other oppositions like rationality/irrationality, civilized/primitive, instrumental/expressive and so on. For example, Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) argued that despite the variety of ways of thinking about the orient (in history, literature, comic books and television programmes) the westerner has always been placed in a position of superiority. This is a product of a long complicated history of symbolic representations and associations in European culture but has served as an organizing device for the classificatory practices in knowledge construction.

The imagination examination of things oriental was based on more or less exclusively upon a western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an oriental would emerge, first according to general ideas about who and what was an oriental, then accordingly to a detailed logic grounded not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projects. (Said 1978:6)

There is a great deal more informing Said's position than the Derridean concern to lay base the opposition of same /other but this brief extract provides a powerful illustration of how oppositional relationships matter in the way we understand the world. Contemporary accounts of cultural difference have emerged as a product of Saussure's conception of the production of meaning through relations of difference.

Like Saussure, Derrida not only identifies meaning as relational but he also assumes that any attempt to fix the meaning of a sign is doomed to fail for there is always a surplus meaning, a 'supplement' which leaves the meaning of sign open to disarticulation and rearticulation. For instance, according to Derrida, difference has a double meaning; there are relations of difference through which meanings are produced (difference) as well as the sense of difference as differed that no meaning 'is

ever finished' and always unstable and provisional (Derrida 1978,1981). Just as it is no longer possible to permanently fix the meaning of cultural identities, it is no longer possible to think in terms of a single unified text. To understand how the production of meaning is organized and regulated we need to turn to Foucault's genealogical approach.

Foucault was concerned with representational complexity and the question of how knowledge is produced within a shared cultural context within definite historical circumstances. In his early structuralist writings he explored the question of how it was possible to establish 'truth' when the concept had its own history with many meanings. To understand the varied uses of the category of truth, he argued that we had to take into account the discourse of which it was a part, the system of representation which regulates what meanings can or cannot be produced. Discourse, he wants to argue, involves configurations of rules of conduct, established texts and institutional practices each situated in a historically and socially specific set of cultural relations. For example, disability discourses operate as a system of representation constituted by evolving rules of conduct which (through reference to the established corpus of knowledge embodied in established texts) which regulate what meanings can and cannot be produced in institutional practices. They make a difference to people's lives. What matters of course, is the kind of difference they make.

The genealogical approach identified the complex techniques which regulate control and keep people under surveillance. It also addresses the role played by the academy in providing the terms of reference and legitimacy for such processes, whereby social scientists impose their own culturally specific presumptions and prejudices on the object of analysis with which they were concerned. In the processes of objectification we can also see how social scientific knowledge is involved in a

complex process of constructing the identities of those they seek to study. Knowledge creates new 'subjects' and identifies what is normal and abnormal in relationship to them. The social agents of knowledge (the scientists, doctors, teachers, social workers, police officers, social security officers-in short, anyone with the institutional power to define the identity of any one else) are involved in activities which reinforce the powerlessness of the marginalized and excluded in the social order.

One of the weaknesses of the approaches which had drawn upon linguistics was the neglect of history and the mechanisms through which discourses, as system of representation, are open to change and transformation. Foucault suggested that these changes take place through the institutional practices in which discourses regulated the production of meaning. So, in Foucault's account we can see how discourses are transformed and operation of the distinctions such as normal and the pathological. By assessing people against distinctions such as rational/irrational, normal/abnormal and so on, social scientists are also moral agents. They judge behavior against cultural values and in turn, these values only make sense within the discourse concerned. Discourses involve constant struggles for dominance and the generation of resistance. Identities are therefore accomplished through struggle but they are never complete for there is no closure of meaning. The construction of an identity, involves the creation of a boundary which only makes sense when we consider the relations between the inside and the outside of that identity. Post structuralism approaches reconstruct discursive oppositions to make sense of the way that cultures and identities, not by listing their attributes but as defined through the complex interrelations of discursive oppositions within representations.



### III. Cultural Conflict in *The Kitchen God's Wife*

Amy Tan, Chinese American writer, tries hard to depict vivid description of Chinese culture during the time of Second World War and also unveils cultural conflict with Chinese American mother to her second generation daughter, supposed to be too Americanized. On the other hand, the young generation is often spilt by two different cultures. Regarding the subject Patrica Lin notes:

The polarity between traditional Chinese and American values is felt with particular keenness by American-born Chinese woman. Unlike, such as woman face conflicting demands from two opposing cultures. While American –born daughters are similar with cultural nuances of Chinese life, their dilemmas frequently storm from having to vacillate between ‘Chineseness’ and ‘Americanness’. Their Chinese –born mothers, in contrast are less plagued by the complexities of being Chinese, American, and women (qtd. in Ghymn 1995, 28)

If the mother and daughter are taken as being portrayed as representatives of traditional Chineseness and modern Americanness, Tan places equal weigh on both sides of the hyphenated Chinese- American. Structurally, the novel devotes equally two chapters to each of the mother and daughter who tell their own narration. Renowned critic Tamara S Wagner also sees Amy Tan’s novel deal with east west cultural subject on the same place, which it ultimately turn conflict. “Amy Tan is undoubtedly western writer, even though her subject matter setting and themes are concerned with the east, or more specifically, with the meeting of east and west with cultural as well ethnic hybridity” (p. 2).

Amy Tan’s novel, *The Kitchen Gods Wife* depicts the China–born–mother, Winnie’s inner turmoil with the America–born–daughter Pearl’s trepidation. The

cultural distance between mother and daughter contributes to the fears they have for each other. As products of different cultures and histories, the main characters of the novel Winnie and Pearl, the mother and daughter respectively abide by different cultural values and passes different modes of interpretation. The mother, Winnie is Chinese sojourners in American whose ways of thinking and doings are thoroughly Chinese in spite of her many years of American residency. To the daughter, Pearl who has her roots in America and who has been cultivated with ideals of freedom, democracy and individualism can easily maintain her life.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Pearl mentions that “Bao –Bao, two former wives, were what Auntie Helen called “Americanness, as if she were referring to a racial group” (32). In the novel somewhere creates confusion on clear demarcation line between Chineseness and Americanness. However, most of the places we can divide on two halves.

The protagonist of the novel Winnie, who was born and reared on the China, displaced after harrowing effects of Second World War, is profoundly conscious to perpetuate her rituals, culture, norms and values. So, she always stands on the side of radicalism on the novel, she demands with Pearl to teach her offspring proper discipline and mannerism, “you should teach her manner, not to ask too much same way I taught you” (82). Before cultural and geographical dislocation of generation, they spend their child hard on the radical Chinese society where girls are supposed to be subordinate Winnie depicts her situation at her childhood: ‘the girls eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing. The girl’s ears should never be used for listening to ideals only to orders, the girls lips should be small rarely used, except to express appreciation or ask for approval’. (102)

On the other hand, her daughter, Pearl born and grown up in America where she finds apt place to set up her nature—selfish, individualistic—and disobey radical family norms and values. Winnie again vividly depicts the nature of American and Chinese society as:

In China back then, you were always responsible to somebody else. It's not like here in the United States —freedom, independence, individual thinking, do what you want disobey your mother. No such thing. Nobody ever said to me, “Be good little girl and I will give you piece of candy.” You did not get a reward for being good, that was expected. But if you were bad —your family could do anything to you, reason needed. (132)

Again Winnie mentions that Pearl's offsprings more clever. They are equally conscious about children and human right. Pearl's daughters have courage to say, “My body is my body; don't touch me” (312). That sorts of courage has boosted up on friendly and independent environment of American culture. However, Chinese society erects the Confucius rules, that awful Confucius man who made that society should emphasize on strict family rules, togetherness, socialism and patriarchy. In such society elder should have to take full responsibility of younger mischievous. Winnie was elder than Peanot so that she always fears with Peanot's mischievous. She says: “If her mother found out about this (making love with Wen Fu), I would be more trouble than she. Peanot was younger than I was, so I was responsible for her behavior. And I was scared of what old Aunt and new Aunt would do”(132).

Before the Second World War, Chinese society deeply blurred with conservative beliefs, superstitions, fates, narrowness on their thought, mannerism, social prestige, hierarchy and so on. That society strictly followed social norms and

values. Zibuyong- hens –chicken and roosters, homosexuality was most detestable things within the community. Therefore kith and kin was not leaving any stone to turn to keep secret it on the public. Peanot's mother-in law by hook and by crook venture not to open her son's deformity of sexuality. As she told about her husband sleeping with another man, she tortured to unveil secret on the public. Peanots mentions: "She slapped me told me never report such lies about her son again" (351). After that incident Peanot began to detest snobbish of Chinese society. She asserts "the society is like bright paint applied on top of rotten wood" (352). While going through narrative parts of pearl, she comments on the staunch believe on the superstition of her mother. That vary nature is exactly opposite part of scientific believe. She refers :

It drives me crazy listening to her various hypotheses the way religion medicine and superstition all merge with her own beliefs. She puts faith in other people's logic to logic is a sneaky excuse for tragedies, mistakes and accidents. and according to my mother; nothing is an accident. She is like a Chinese version of fraud or worse. Everything has a reason. Everything could have been prevented. (29)

In Pearl's childhood, Winnie tries to feed wrong concept about ghost which may cause inerasable trace on the mind of the fear of ghost. But Winnie 'an American husband James refusing ideas of ghost tries to prove it on scientific way, non existence of it. For example, on narration section of pearl, an incident whereas Winnie sees smokes as laughing ghost but James refutes by saying 'ghost was only holy ghost'. Pearl says :

To this day, I can still vividly remember the laughing ghost that finally proved out of the pumpkins mouth. My mother had come rushing into room when I screamed. I was babbling tearfully that I had seen a ghost.

And instead of confronting me, or pooh –poohing that it was just my imagination, she had said where? And then searched the room. of course my father later assumed me that the only ghost was my holy ghost, and he would never try to scare me. (42)

Later Winnie herself confesses that the creed and belief of her and her husband has a remarkable difference. Her husband believes in Christianity, instantly never believes in superstition and fates, rather investigates on being based on scientific method.

Winnie being grown up amid among the eastern culture and creed she formulates her thought and ideas, basically saturated with superstitions and fates. Winnies says, “that’s what I said to your father many years later after we were married. How luckily we were that fate brought us together. But your father did not think it was fate, at least not the Chinese ideas of Ming Yuan fate” (34). But the father believes “fate is somebody else deciding your life for you. our love has greater than that [. . .]. So I told him, may be you see things in an American way. And I see the same things in a Chinese way” (34).Therefore, Winnie is the byproduct of Chinese society. She has different views on regarding the matter of life, society, religions and family.

Winnie always thinks that her daughter is becoming too Americanized so she cannot understand her sentiments, feelings, pains and sufferings. That is way she always keeps secrete her past bitter experience. she mentions on her narrative part, “When I come to this country, I told myself: I can think in a new way. Now I can forget my tragedies, put all my secretes behind a door that will never be opened, never seen by American eyes. I was thinking my past was closed forever” (71).

According to her ideas, ‘American eyes’ means materialistic society, capitalist society or spiteful eyes, not leaving any stone to turn by making money even from dead body. She tells once on the incident of Grand Auntie death, “can you imagine?

Grand auntie died, he (Bao-Bao) did not cry, only wants to make money off her dead body” (14). As the same way, on the other hand, pearl thinks her mother as too traditional, too superstitious and too conservative or ‘Chinese version of fraud or worse’. The physiological ailment that pearl suffers from, namely multiple sclerosis is unknown fact to the mother, because she mentions, “I never told my mother. At first I did not want to her theories on my illness, what caused this to happen, how she should have done this or that to prevent it? I did not want her to remain” (30). Because of their convictions, they fear with each other to reveal their secrete. So, both of them feel differences in beliefs. Pearl once mentions on her narrative part: “Mile after mile, all of it familiar, yet not, this distance that separate us; me from my mother” (57). That is not physical distance that bring gap between the characters but creed and culture pushed away from each other in spite of being blood relation of mother and daughter, both do not share their feels, pains and suffering. Many times they didn’t converse with each other. Pearl feels that: “Whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument” (11). It happens, for, two causes – one Winnie speaks bi-language -Chinese and English, but not master in English. Her daughter can merely speak and understand English. So her mother’s broken English cannot convince her daughter on any subject matter. Second, their cultural differences that formulates different norms, values, ethics, or ideas on regarding the subject, which becomes staunch belief on characters.

## **Mother language Verses Daughter Language : An Element of Cultural Conflict**

Throughout her novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan promotes multiple levels of misunderstanding between both Chinese –speaking mother and English speaking daughter and between persons who speak different Chinese dialects. As a linguistic strategy, ‘talk- story’ in Tan’s novels often fails to convey clearly the speaker's message to her audience. Some critics have attempted to complicate the use of talk-story in their analysis of Tan’s work, but they never see literacy and written narrative written as an alternative. Judith Creaser indicates that while Tan's use of a multi-voiced talk story narrative is noteworthy, even more significant is who speaks in the texts. Following the usual live of argument that privileges orality, Caesar specially argues that by privileging the accented and fragmented speech of Chinese immigrants, Tan gives their voices validity in the same way that African American writers have validated the vernacular speech of black communities (170). Caesar’s arguments demonstrate the way that literary critics have found value in tans work through an interpretation of Chinese speech as a rhetorical device.

Yuan Yuan mentions in his essay ‘The semiotics of china narratives in the contexts of Kingston and Tan’ “as products of different cultures and histories, mother and daughter abide by different cultural values and posses different modes of interpretation. In fact, they speak entirely different languages” (293). Both mother and daughter constantly have to re-evaluate respective talk story that are grounded in entirely different cultural contexts, with different historical references and subject positions. The misinterpretations and misunderstandings of kitchen god's story is representative of these throughout of Tan's work. In fact, these miscommunications are a result of faculty translation. The narrative part of Pearl mention: "Phil chuckles at my mother’s Americanized explanation of the hierarchy of Chinese deities’ . I

wonder if that's how she really thinks of them or if she's used this metaphor for our benefit" (53). Throughout Tan's novels, these fail to attempts at communication are in part produced by a tension between persons who have different understandings of how stories, culture, and language are supposed to work.

The mother and daughter often lack a real and mutual communication, for the two entities communicate but don't commune, talk but don't listen to each other. Pearl says: "Before I can answer, my mother tightens her face, snakes her head, and says, "Don't understand, Don't speak English" (21). Pearl in *The Kitchen God's Wife* again admits her failure to communicate with her own mother. She admits, "whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument" (11). Growing up in two different cultures, the mother and daughter have multiple level of misunderstanding creating cultural conflict. Born into such a traditional patriarchal Chinese society which was unfavorable to female self-development, Chinese immigrant mother Winnie inevitably develop a negative attitude towards womanhood that in turn affects her relationship with and the self – development of her American born daughter Pearl.

Winnie Louie describes her own American dream. When she come with great helps to the new land of America to stand a new and promising life, she left her unhappy life in China behind and tried to bury her miserable memory in the innermost recesses of her heart. In stead of offering only prosperity and hopes, the American experience turns out to be a challenge for Chinese mothers to overcome. Winnie states:

When I come to this country, I told myself: I can think a new way.  
Now I can forget my tragedies, put all my secrets behind a door that  
will never be opened never seen by American eyes. I was thinking my



part was closed forever and all I had to remember was to call Formosa  
“china” shrink all of China into one little island I had never seen  
before. (71)

The mother Winnie bears the hardships of tragic past but she cannot share with her Americanized daughter Pearl. Out of the frustration of her tragic past, her present American dream has to high expectation for her American born daughter but her daughter whose roots are in the present American environment could not understand her.

In Amy Tan's novel, parental authority, expectation and cultural difference all come to work to produce antagonism and tussle in the mother-daughter relationship. While American daughters have their ideas rooted in a culture that enables children to enjoy considerable freedom and independence, Chinese mothers have their ways of life adhered to a culture that emphatically insists on children's connection to and dependence on parents. Growing up in a traditional and conservative family, Winnie insists on putting her daughter Pearl in parental guidance. As she asserts, "The girl's eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing. The girl's ears should never be used for listening to ideas, only to orders. The girl's lips should be small, rarely used, except to express appreciation or ask for approval" (102).

In the eyes of the daughter, the Chinese mother is controlling, demanding and manipulating. The sovereignty of a Chinese mother has covered almost every part of her American daughter's life and affected her attitude toward life and self development. While American daughters are encouraged to learn from empirical experiences, on the other Chinese mothers insists on putting their children under parental guidance in the process of self-development.

Just like her attitude toward her past in and about China, a Chinese mothers feeling about her American –born daughter are ambivalent and even contradictory. On the one hand, she wants her daughter to fit in the mainstream of American society, and on the other hand she is dismayed by her daughter’s through assimilation of American culture. Winnie says, “In China back then, you were always responsible to somebody else. It is not like here in the united stated–freedom, independence, individual thinking do what you want disobey your mother” (32). In the Chinese mother’s eyes, American culture is often indicated by its individualism and even egotism, which runs counter to her Chinese heritage featured by its emphasis on community and altruism. Respect, trust consideration and compassion are requisite elements of female friendship which sustain the sisterhood among Chinese immigrant mothers whereas the lack of confidentiality is the deadly poison that destroys the relationships among American-born daughters.

From being complete failure, the tensions produced by competing forms of narration are somewhat alleviated through Tan's portal of the didactic nature of the mother’s voices. Winnie Louise narrative, which comprises the bulk of Tan’s second novel; *The Kitchen God's Wife*, provides a specific example of a mother who must teach her daughter how to listen and understand her stories as she speaks. In this text, Winnie narrates secret pasts and truths “too complicated” to tell to her Americanised daughter Pearl, but can only speak in the English she has not wholly mastered. Pearl asks with her mother what is written in the red banner which put on their flower shop but her mother can not convey clear meaning. Pearl says, “Her finger moves slowly down the red banner, as she reads in a formal Chinese I can not understand. And then she translates, “fare-well, Grand Auntie, heaven is lucky. From your favorite niece, Pearl Louie Brandt, and husband” (24).

Because of the lack of vocabulary in English, Winnie cannot translate formal Chinese words into English. On the other hand Pearl does not understand Chinese words. Winnie says that she will tell her daughter, “not what happened but why it happened, how it could not be any other way” (100). In the narrative that follows, Winnie uses talk-story to narrate her own history, but as she talks she must help her daughter understand both her broken English and what remains untranslatable. While the story chronicles the life of a young Winnie from orphan to absurd wife, the narration consciously draws attention to the language that it uses. Though Winnie speaks to her daughter in English, she must attempt to teach her Chinese words that when spoken have no translation. When Winnie is in urgent need of money from her dowry account, she sends a telegram to her cousin Peanut that reads “hurry, we are soon taonan” (259). She continues with her explanation of the necessity for funds, but is cut off with a question about what the word means from her listening daughter. Winnie tries to answer her daughter by explaining the significance of the word since she cannot translate its literal meaning. She says:

This word, taonan! Oh there is no American word I can think of that means the same thing. But in China we have lots of different words to describe all kinds of troubles. No ‘refugee’ is not exactly. Refugee is what you are after you have been taonan and is still alive. And if you are alive; you would never want to talk about what made you taonan.  
(250)

This passage demonstrates the voices that Tan develops for her Chinese mothers by balancing the simplicity of diction with vivid imagery to illustrate the narrative. It also demonstrates the confusion and misunderstanding common in exchanges between Tan’s mother and daughter’s. However once she has explained and developed the idea

of taonan, she can use the word throughout the rest of her narrative in place of a less specific English translation. Later, when she tells her daughter how fear can change a person, she says, “you don’t know such a person exists inside of you until you become taonan” (270). While the true significance of the word; her daughter can begin to understand the importance of word through her mother's instruction.

Narrative part of Pearl also confesses once in the novel that the mother and daughter are unable to share their feelings and attitudes with each other. As Pearl says, "Mostly I see my mother sitting one table away, and I feel as lonely as I imagine her to be I think of the enormous distance that separates us and makes us unable to share the most important matter of our life. How did this happen? (34).

Living together, they can not share each other’s matters of life due to the cultural and generational gap.

In this novel, often the source of those mediations comes through the vehicle of the written text. Winnie Louie in the novel is highly aware of the importance of writing and authorship. Winnie demonstrates her ability to create meaning through writing the banners that she designs for her floral business. As Pearl tells the reader, the red banners she includes with each floral arrangement did not contain typical congratulatory sayings. In stead, “all the sayings, written in gold Chinese characters, are of her own inspiration, her thoughts about life and death, luck and hope '(19).

These inspirational banners with their creative saying like “money smells good in your new restaurant business” and ‘first class life for your first baby’ represent more than a creative outlet. For Winnie Louie, their authorship is the very reason for her business's success and an expression of her identity.

Winnie continually stresses the importance of her literacy and that of her mother. As a child on a trip to the market with her mother, Winnie tells the reader that

she could not read and therefore could not tell what the paper her mother purchased was unable to read, she misses vital information about events that will eventually change her life. However, by the end of her to escape from China before the communists take power. In a society where the “traditional way” (121) deems that “the girls eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing” (121). The fact that Winnie’s mother was both highly educated and bilingual represents an important difference. Winnie ability to write in both Chinese and English indicates that her use of oral narrative was a conscious choice rather than the result of some limitation. That Winnie can choose between the two languages and modes of expression demonstrates that talk-story works only in selective situations and that it is not the only choice Chinese women have for authentic self expression. Instead, literacy –the ability to both reading and writing marks Tan's mother figures as powerful as forces in her texts.

Though Tan asserts the voice of Chinese immigrant women through her own writing, the written texts that appear throughout works endow Chinese and Chinese – immigrant women the agency to write themselves, an agency that critics have not yet recognized in the over –emphasis on oral story. Tan has intentionally fashioned a complexity of voice for her Chinese mother features. In her essay "mother tongue", Tan emphasizes her conscious desire to give validity to the voice of those who speak "broken" or ‘non standard’ English in her novels. She tells her reader that she writes her stories with all of the English she used throughout her life' (7).

### **Patriarchal Society: Responsible for Cultural Conflict**

Amy Tan's novel *the Kitchen God's Wife* reveals the hardships, dishonor and torments faced by a woman in a patriarchal traditional Chinese society. The predicament and misrepresentation of women as an object to be possessed and

maintained by a man is represented by Winnie in a patriarchal society of feudal China is one of the cause of misunderstanding between the Chinese mother and Americanized daughter. Through her Chinese American women characters, Amy Tan dramatizes her critiques of Chinese patriarchy and claim for Chinese cultural values, such as familial coherence, collaboration, and responsibility with an attempt to reach a balance of cultural identity, but it leads to the cultural and generational clash in her novel.

The mother-daughter bond in her novel is featured with symbiosis and interdependence which is replete with ambivalence and conflicts. The mother Winnie tend to wield her parental authority while her daughter Pearl often shows a clear rebellion against parental control. The mother experienced war, death, loss of beloved, and most traumatically, patriarchal oppression in the form of arranged marriage and sexual violence. As Winnie states:

Suddenly he grabbed my hair and threw me to the floor. You want to be a whore! he shouted. "I will let you be a whore." He went to a table and pulled something out from the drawer. He threw down a piece of paper, and then a pen and a bottle of ink. "Now I am divorcing you," he said. "Write that down. "My husband is divorcing me". (307-08)

The patriarchal male centered society is organized and conducted in such a way to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains, familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic manner.

The patriarchal norms and values have widely identified male as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative and so on; while the female as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional. When Winnie looked up "I saw he was pointing a gun to my head, smiling crazing. "It's no use! our marriage is

finished", he said. "If you don't write this, I will kill you!" (308). The patriarchal norms and values have learned man to manipulate a woman as he likes. Many Chinese women in male centered society endure multiple layer of victimization because of cultural, social, and familial forces.

Winnie, the heroine of *The Kitchen Gods Wife*, is the archetypal figure of women who suffers, struggles, and thrives in Chinese patriarchy. She embodies female victimization by familial indifference, social hostility, and sexual abuse. She received several abuses from her husband Wen Fu. She recalls

That night, with a gun to my head, he raped me, telling me I had lost the privileges of a wife and now had only the duties of a whore. He made me murmur thanks to him. He made me beg for more of his punishment I did all those things until I was senseless, laughing and crying, all feeling in my body gone. (309)

In patriarchal society, Winnie has been physically and psychologically abused and dominated by her bully and sadist husband Wen Fu for many years.

Amy Tan reveals the tension that is engendered in first generation Americanized daughter Pearl and her immigrant Chinese traditional mother Winnie grown up in patriarchal Chinese society. On the surface, Winnie's ways are more irritating than mysterious to the daughter, who arrogantly assigns herself a critical perspective on her mother's life. But with full account of that life, Pearl comes to know not only an identifiable and deeply moving women who engages sympathy, but also cruel mores, the male domination and the rigid class structure of the society that distorted the child and her mother was into the seemingly crabbed old women grown up in a patriarchal Chinese culture. The mother sees her daughter Pearl to much

modernized and Americanized while the daughter sees her mother Winnie as very conservative and superstitious. So, they have trouble to understand each other.

When the immigrant Chinese mother grown up in patriarchal society counts on her American born daughter retrieving what she had lost in China and seeking what she has failed to acquire in America; discrepancies between the motherly demand and the daughterly fulfillment often occur and lead to endless rebellions and clashes between two generations representing two different American and Chinese culture.

In Amy Tan's fiction, traditional Chinese culture and society were essentially dominated by Confucian ethics, replete with male –biased norms for women. Within these cultural and social contexts, Chinese women were often designated to the passive, obedient, silent, submissive or subservient role, and deprived of the right of being as well as the free will of becoming. Therefore, many of Amy Tan's stories about women of old China appear as accounts protesting against women's being devastated by sexual inequalities in China patriarchal society (92). In this category of stories, Amy tan aims to show that the patriarchal authority is often embodied in arrange marriages without love, in society accepted concubine, and in the double-standard concept of virginity. All of these social and cultural evils conspire to constitute the tragic fate of Chinese women in past. To Amy Tan, women in the old China, named or anonymous from upper or lower classes, wealthy or poor, intellectual or illiterate, all suffer from a terrible fate regardless of their birth, upbringing material status, or education. They are victims of the customs of female virginity. Winnie's mother in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, for instance, has access to western education and becomes as a new woman at the turn of country. And yet, she cannot escape the fate of being an old man's concubine after her father is dead and her



family declines, financially and socially. Moreover, the young peasant girl who is found in tale told by the lover of Winnie's mother "nang(s) herself with the rope of her own hair, tied to the (wedding) Sedan slates on top" (170) to protest against her being forced to marry "an old man she (does) not even know" (106).

On the other hand, generally speaking, Chinese mothers in Amy Tan are fiction, both assertive/strong-willed and submissive/weak-willed, have suffered from the impact of the negative ideas of traditional womanhood. However, assertive and strong-willed mother always knows the importance of self-appreciation and self-assertion so that she is able to break free from the traditional womanhood and obtain her own happiness. Winnie Louie in *The Kitchen God's Wife* belongs to this category of weak-willed mother. Self-assertion and self-esteem are soon transformed into wisdom for Winnie to figure out a way to extract herself from her predicament. Comparatively, Winnie is inert to defend themselves against evil forces that tend to threaten their selfhood. They do not take actions to fight back until their selfhood are severely encroached or distorted.

It is interesting to find that in Amy Tan's stories mother selves who come from family of wealth and prestige endure more social constraints and are more apt to deny themselves than those who have undistinguished backgrounds. Winnie growing up in affluent families but turnout to be weak-willed because of their internationalization of the negative ideals of traditional womanhood. There is one thing in common about them: They all are bombarded with lessons of female obedience and silence from their own mothers or female caretakers in the progress of their growth.

Back to the old China, a woman's life thus is full of admonishments, warnings, rules concerning female obedience and silence. She learns all those lessons

hindering her self-development from the elders around her, male and female, in her natal family and her husband's house. Take Winnie, for example, while asking about her comments on an old Chinese painting on the wall, Winnie's father appreciates her aesthetic knowledge but firmly urges her to renounce her own judgment and accept her husband's in her marriage life. He tells Winnie: "from now on, you must consider what your husband's opinions are. Yours do not matter so much any more. do you understand?" (145). After getting married, Winnie is also admonished by her mother-in-law to take her husband as the center of her life and be ready to sacrifice for him in daily life. Winnie states:

So this is what my mother-in-law taught me: To protect my husband so he would protect me. To fear him and think this was respect. To make him a proper hot soup, which was ready to serve only when I had scalded my little finger testing. "Do not hurt!" my mother-in-law would exclaim if I shouted in pain. That kind of sacrifice for a husband never hurts. (168)

The notion of punishment is always associated with female reticence and female obedience, which is seen in every lesson taught to a girl.

As such, woman in Amy Tan's stories is taught, advised, and warned to evaluate take care of, and listen to everyone except herself. She is also put in an anxiety of being punished for failing all these lessons. Cultivated with such womanhood, she is inevitably compelled to take the role of the listener rather than the speaker, good at listening to admonishments and orders from other than her own heart. Learning to swallow her sorrows and those of others, she is often caught in a state of inactivity, dependence and depression. Born into such cultural and social context that is unfavorable to female self-development, Chinese immigrant mothers,

such as Winnie inevitably develop a negative womanhood that development of their American –born daughters, Pearl. Amy Tan’s stories about Chinese mothers and American daughter always highlight the importance of the breaking of silence as a way for women to assert their identity and preserve their integrity. At the beginning of the story, because of the mothers reluctance to break silence –to speak up about her miserable past-conflicts-misunderstanding, and ambivalence all emerge in the confrontation of the mother and daughter. It is not until the mother decides to tell the daughter about her ordeals in the past empower and saved. Caught up in two generational and cultural differences, both generations are struggling to understand each other and to reach a point of balance between connection to and separation from each other. The immigrant mother who experienced war, death, hardships, patriarchal suppression and so on, endured numerous tribulations and orders in the part recounts her tragic history with Americanized daughter. As Winnie states:

I have told you about the early days of my marriage so you can understand why I became weak and strong at the same time. May be according to your American mind, you cannot be both, that would be a contradiction. But according to my life, I had to be both, that the only way I could live. It was life this: for the past rest of the war. I lived a life without hope. But without hope, I no longer despaired. I no longer fought against my marriage. Yet I did not accept it either. That was my life, everything always in between –without hope, yet without despair; without resistance, but without acceptance. So you see, weak or strong.

(313)

Representating two different cultures and generation, the mother and daughter follow different ways of living. Their way of thinking and living varies according to the

believes and rules they follows. Empowered by her mother's breaking silence, Pearl ultimately understands her mother situation and nature. In Amy Tan's stories about mothers and daughters, the breaking silence of the mother always exhorts a positive influence on the daughter's self-development. Instead of coercing the daughter into "marital enslavement" (86). It unfailingly empowers the daughter to quest for self-knowledge and selfhood. As one critic asserts, "(r)egardless of how much the daughters try to deny it. It is through their mothers that they find their voice, their mind, their selfhood voice finds its from in the process of interaction, even if that interaction is conflict" (87).

It is evident that traditional Chinese women hood, which has been passed down from grandmother, to mother and to daughter, needs to be mended so as to fit into the new cultural and social contexts for the generation of American-born daughter. In the same vain, the role played by a woman also need to be redefined according to new social and cultural contexts. Female obedience and reticence cannot be regarded as virtues for woman any more. Women have to speak their minds, desires and needs in order to preserve and instigate their selfhood. Only by breaking silence can they bridge the gap between themselves and their beloved ones. The act of breaking silence benefits both generations and sexes. Chinese mother who used to be weak willed see their own weakness, resignation, and reticence reflected in her daughter. They come to understand the urgency of breaking their silence in order to save their daughters. By telling their ordeals and secrete past, Chinese mother ultimately empower their beloved daughters and themselves as well, for "story telling heals past experiences of loss and separation; it is also a medium for stories of oppression and victimization into parables of self-affirmation and individual empowerment" (88). In her representation of breaking female silence, Amy Tan

indeed demonstrates the power of telling to erase the fiction, to heal the wounds, and to bridge the gap between the mother and the daughter, the old and the news, the present and the past, and the east and the west.

#### IV. Conclusion

The focus of Amy Tan's creative concern is on the problematic mother–daughter and sisterly relationship. The mothers in Amy Tan's novels are Chinese sojourners in America whose ways of thinking and doing are thoroughly Chinese in spite of their many years of American residency. To the daughter, who has her root in America and who has been cultivated with ideals of freedom, democracy, “individualism and instrumental reason” (73) the Chinese mother/ surrogate mother stands for past, the old, the outdated, the mysterious, and sometimes the superstitions. Thus, conflict always exists between the mother and the daughter. In addition to cultural conflicts, secrets also serve as barriers to the understanding between mother and daughter in Amy Tan's novel. There always exists secrets in the relationship between a Chinese immigrant mother and her American –born daughter, who keep their secrets from each other for fear that the plain fact would deteriorate their relationship or brings harm to their significant others. But the secrets must be revealed so that the conflicts can be reconciled. As a result, at the end of the story, all the conflicts will be transformed into reconciliation by the interaction and the revelation of secrets between two generations.

Given that the mother–daughter bond in Tan's fiction is feature with symbiosis and interdependence, it is replete with ambivalence and conflicts. In Amy Tan's description, mother selves tend to wield their parental authority while daughter selves often show a clear rebellion against parental control caught up in generational and cultural differences, both generations are struggling to understand each other and to reach a point of balance between connection to and separation from each others. Immigrant Chinese mother in Amy Tan's story endured numerous tribulations and ordeals in the past. They experienced war, death, losses of the beloved ones, and most

traumatically, patriarchal oppression in a form of arranged marriage and sexual violence. When they come with great hopes to the new land of America to start a new and promising life, they left their unhappy lives in china behind and tried to bury their miserable memories in the innermost recesses of their hearts. Instead of offering only prosperity and hopes, the American experience turns out to be challenges for Chinese mother to over come. First of all, because of her inability to master the language of English she has difficulties in filling fully in American culture and thus is habitually misunderstood and relegated to the margins. Moreover, even though she tries hard to be oblivious of the past she actually has clung to her Chinese background so tenaciously that she is often at odds with her daughter whose roots is in the present American environment. More often than that, Chinese immigrant mother, out of the frustration of her life in the past and her American dreams at the present, has too high expectations for her American–born daughter. As compensation for what they have lost in the past and at present, they expect her daughter to achieve what she have been denied and avoid going through the ordeals she has endured. She wants the best for her daughter. Therefore, she devotes her time, money and energy to facilitating the success and happiness of her daughter. For instance, she has suffered a lot form her growing up in China and her sojourn in America, she therefore wants her daughter to benefit from the best of Chinese and American heritage so as to fit in the mainstream of American society thoroughly. However, when the immigrant Chinese mother count on her American –born daughter retrieving what they had lost in China and seeking what she has failed to achieve in America, discrepancies between the motherly demand and daughterly fulfillment often occur and lead to endless rebellions and fights between two generations.

In the eyes of the daughter, the Chinese mother, is controlling, demanding and manipulating. The sovereignty of a Chinese mother has covered almost every part of her American daughter life affected her attitude toward life and self-development. A mother's expectations are often responsible; Amy Tan suggests, for her daughter's self distrust and self –underestimation. When the daughter refuses or fails to live out the mother's dream, distance and estrangement inevitably emerge between two generations. In Amy Tan's fiction, parental authority, expectations and cultural difference all come to work to produce antagonism in the mother-daughter relationship. While American daughter has ideas rooted in a culture that enables children to enjoy considerable freedom and independence, Chinese mother has her ways of life adhered to a culture that emphatically insists on children's connection to end dependence on parents. While American daughter is encouraged to learn from empirical experiences, Chinese mother insists on putting her children under parental guidance in the process of self-development. Amy Tan often incorporates her perception of cultural differences between the west and the east together with her personal experience into her fiction.



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