Culture Clash:India Essay, Research Paper

Culture Clash: Culturally and Politically

As I sit here on my bed and wonder how women have been subordinated for so long in the world, I am reminded of why we are. The phrase The personal is political , from Virginia Woolf s book A Room Of One s Own, is a key idea to why we are. The reason for my attempt to talk on this topic is based on the world and my own experiences. Women are controlled by the systems of government, family, culture, and gender, and especially marriage.

I know that in the Indian culture, where I am originally from, women are put down in many aspects by the people around them, both politically and culturally. In India, there is so much poverty and overpopulation. Women are not allowed to have the personal freedom they want because the family and the country expects certain values to be followed, and if they are not followed, we are socially and politically looked down upon. This curtails a woman s opportunity to attain the achievements men are able to make. The reason for this being that women of lower and middle classes are rarely educated, the males are controlling, health issues are a concern, and women are expected to get arranged marriages, based on status, wealth, religion, and language. Families who have even moved to the United States from India follow many of the traditional values that they have been so accustomed to. In the US, it is politically looked down upon an Indian woman of a traditional family to have an interracial marriage or relationship, and divorce rarely happens, for an Indian couple in the US or in India. When a woman is married, she is supposed to leave her house to go lead a new life with her husband and his family. This life is what is expected of an Indian woman; however, we must remember that there is still the upper class of women in India. These women come from influential families and are placed in the highest institutions to one day become professionals. Even for these highly educated women, they are still held by the values of the household and held by the traditions of India.

One of the most important topics among Indians in general is marriage. For example, I will talk of my own family. My father and mother are both doctors who come from influential families in India. They had an arranged marriage that was based on their education, family, language, and specific Indian background from which they came. The background is that they are both Hindu, speak a language called telugu, and are from a family with the last name of Reddy. In this culture, love is gained after marriage. I do see the love my parents have for one another, but I was surprised that even for affluent families, the strictest traditional expectations are still there. I know that by moving to the United States and living here for the past 24 years, my parents are well established and they are slowly accepting some non-traditional values from the people here. My parents do not expect me to get an arranged marriage; however, my brother, who is 28, would not mind. Dating or relationships before marriage is not accepted easily even now for parents who grew up in such traditional backgrounds. I know that I am only able to talk to my mom about my boyfriend of 2 years. The only thing at this point in my life until I get into medical school, that I can talk to my father about is of my education, which is my top priority. I am allowed to have a boyfriend in my mother s eyes because he is someone she thinks would most probably be accepted because he is Indian also; however there is a

problem that both of us will most probably face in the future. Although he is Indian, he is of a different religion, Sikhism, and of a different language and culture. Although he has graduated from William and Mary, and is going to medical school, this may not necessarily mean he can marry whomever he wants, just like my parents. Being Indian has its own strings, because there are so many barriers even among our own people, that is put upon us because of India. Most families do not like children to marry even outside of our own specific culture and background, as well as religion and language. I hope that in the years to come after I am done with medical school, my parents as well as his, will accept our decision to marry. I think that our families are now moving on to more modern aspects of life and I think most other families are also slowly moving away from the political and social area that was expected from India and its people.

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