



Independence

William Morrow

By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

ISBN: 9780063142381

Introduction

“Divakaruni tells the story of India’s independence through the eyes of three sisters, each of whom is uniquely different, with her own desires and flaws. I cheered for them and cried with them as they move through the history of their country that is at once devastating, inspiring, and triumphant. You will, too.”— Lisa See, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

Set during the partition of British India in 1947, a time when neighbor was pitted against neighbor and families were torn apart, award-winning author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s novel brings to life the sweeping story of three sisters caught up in events beyond their control, their unbreakable bond, and their incredible struggle against powerful odds.

India, 1947.

In a rural village in Bengal live three sisters, daughters of a well-respected doctor.

Priya: intelligent and idealistic, resolved to follow in her father’s footsteps and become a doctor, though society frowns on it.

Deepa: the beauty, determined to make a marriage that will bring her family joy and status.

Jamini: devout, sharp-eyed, and a talented quiltmaker, with deeper passions than she reveals.

Theirs is a home of love and safety, a refuge from the violent events taking shape in the nation. Then their father is killed during a riot, and even their neighbors turn against them, bringing the events of their country closer to home.

As Priya determinedly pursues her career goal, Deepa falls deeply in love with a Muslim, causing her to break with her family. And Jamini attempts to hold her family together, even as she secretly longs for her sister's fiancé

When the partition of India is officially decided, a drastic—and dangerous—change is in the air. India is now for Hindus, Pakistan for Muslims. The sisters find themselves separated from one another, each on different paths. They fear for what will happen to not just themselves, but each other.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni outdoes herself with this deeply moving story of sisterhood and friendship, painting an account of India's independence simultaneously exhilarating and devastating, that will make any reader—new or old—a devoted fan.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Discuss the use of the word 'independence' and how it ties into the themes of the story.
 - 2) None of the three sisters, Deepa, Jamini, and Priya, are perfect. What characteristics in each sister did you admire? What may have disappointed you about each of the sisters? Did your opinion of each sister change as you read the novel?
 - 3) Did you think each sister behaved the right—or wrong—way when they were faced with adversity?
 - 5) What is each sister's strength? What is her weakness?
 - 6) History has traditionally concentrated by the actions of men, however, this is a story from the viewpoint of the women. What about their stories may have surprised you. Did the novel change your viewpoint about the role of women in India during the timeframe of this novel?
 - 7) Did you feel understanding or dismayed by the decisions Bina makes with regard to the choices each of her daughters make?
 - 8) What did you think of the male characters in the novel? Who was the strongest? The wisest? Did any of them disappoint you?
 - 9) Who was your favorite among the female characters? Why? And who was your favorite among the male characters? Why?
 - 10) What did you think of the novel's ending?
-