

The perception of women in asian cultures in "the kitchen god's wife" by amy tan

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Xinran, a former radio presenter in China and currently a columnist indicated, “ Men want a woman who is a virtuous wife, a good mother, and can do all the housework like a maid. Outside the home, she should be attractive and cultivated, and be a credit to him. In bed, she must be a nymphomaniac. What is more, Chinese men also need their women to manage their finances and earn a lot of money, so they can mingle with the rich and powerful”. This statement is sentiment to the perception of women that is held in the in today’s modern society and has been historically existent in China. It is also an indicator of the status of women in Chinese culture and society. Amy Tan is among the highly celebrated and recognized Chinese-American feminist authors globally. She has played a significant role in highlighting the plight of women in the Chinese society where they are expected to live under specific rules and conventions that are established by men. In her book *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, Tan highlights the predicament of who is an aspiring woman that suffers domestic violence in the hands of the husband who tirelessly strives to free herself from her established role in society while contending with her husband on a foothold of equality.

Women, as depicted in the book, have a subordinate status, and in this regard, they were obliged to duty towards the men. In many Asian cultures, the self is defined based on the duties and obligations towards others within their social network. Therefore, strong expectations exist for the malleable individual self to accommodate the relatively unmalleable realities of the society. Therefore, a central element inherent in Chinese culture is duty. In the book, this is evidenced where Winnie in her entire life displays a sense of duty to her husband regardless of the challenges she goes through in her

marriage. When her husband Wen Fu makes his proposal to marry her, out of the obligation to duty inherent in Chinese culture and her knowledge of her duty to marriage she becomes eager to leave her uncle's house to fulfill her duty.

According to Whyte and Qin (2003), daughters within the Chinese culture are considered to be temporary members of their natal families before they are married and after which they become servants to their husbands and their husband's extended family. This is evident in the book where just after Winnie's father approves of her union to Wen Fu, he is seen to advise and remind her of her duty as a wife and he asserts that she is expected to honor and obey Fu, her husband. However, following their marriage, she notices that Wen Fu is not the man she expected to be but rather he was evil and sadistic. Due to her cultural duty, she cannot leave him and is forced to stay in the union and perform her wifely duties regardless of her suffering.

Moreover, even after she moves to America as an adult, she continues to take care of Auntie Du even in her old age. This is as indicated by Whyte and Qin (2003) that as part of their duty Chinese women are expected to take care of their extended family's husband.

A similar sense of duty is transferred to Winnie's daughter Pearl who also sees the importance of duty despite being fully born and assimilated within the Western cultural practices. This evidenced in the sense that she is present in all family gathering which is a typical requirement and expectation for most Americans. In the book, she seems unsure of where her need to fulfill such obligations originate from as she resents such practices

but continues engaging in them. Furthermore, she later comes to understand the sense of duty to her husband and this where she realizes that following the birth of their first child, they argue about increasingly important issues rather than the petty issues they previously argued about. This she perceives as indicated in chapter one may be as a result of the development of a sense of duty by the husband towards the child, her, or her medical condition.