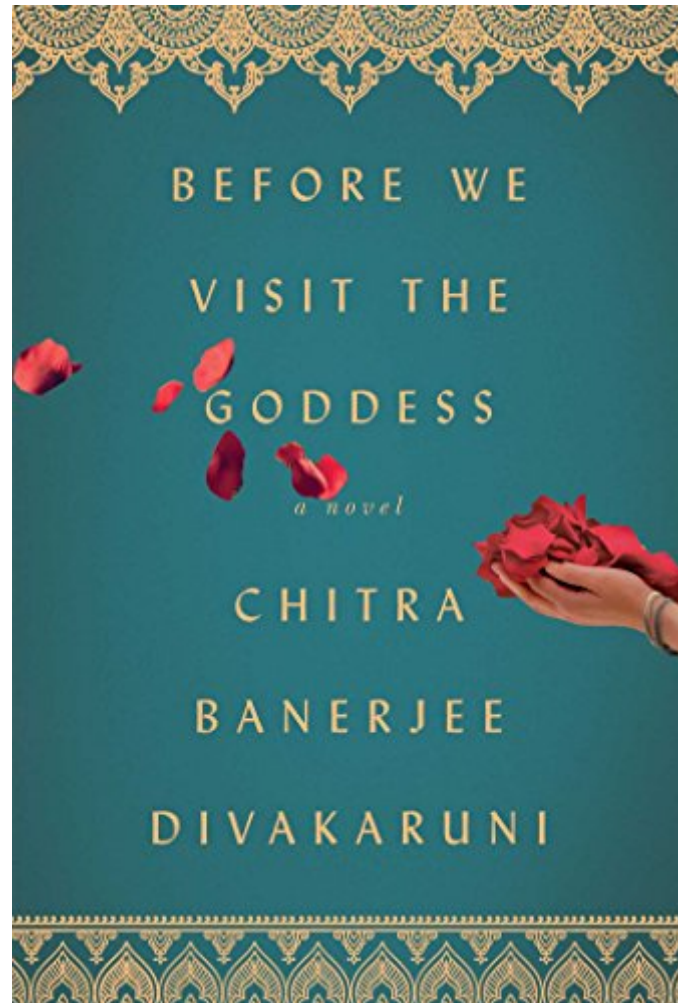


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# Before We Visit The Goddess: A Novel



## Synopsis

A beautiful, powerful new novel from the bestselling, award-winning author of *Sister of My Heart* and *The Mistress of Spices* about three generations of mothers and daughters who must discover their greatest source of strength in one another—a masterful, brilliant tale of a family both united and torn apart by ambition and love. The daughter of a poor baker in rural Bengal, India, Sabitri yearns to get an education, but her family's situation means college is an impossible dream. Then an influential woman from Kolkata takes Sabitri under her wing, but her generosity soon proves dangerous after the girl makes a single, unforgivable misstep. Years later, Sabitri's own daughter, Bela, haunted by her mother's choices, flees abroad with her political refugee lover—but the America she finds is vastly different from the country she'd imagined. As the marriage crumbles and Bela is forced to forge her own path, she unwittingly imprints her own child, Tara, with indelible lessons about freedom, heartbreak, and loyalty that will take a lifetime to unravel. In her latest novel, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explores the complex relationships between mothers and daughters, and the different kinds of love that bind us across generations. *Before We Visit the Goddess* captures the gorgeous complexity of these multi-generational and transcontinental bonds, sweeping across the twentieth century from the countryside of Bengal, India, to the streets of Houston, Texas—an extraordinary journey told through a sparkling symphony of voices.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is something exciting about watching the pieces of a puzzle fall into place, even if you are not making the actual moves. And there is something satisfying about seeing characters in a novel you have grown to love become more than you had hoped. In *BEFORE WE VISIT THE GODDESS*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 16th novel, four generations of one family pass on the losses and misjudgments of one mother to her daughter, to her daughter, to her daughter. The story begins with the decision of Durga to push her daughter, Sabitri, into getting an education, something she herself had always wanted. This leap toward a new life, as Divakaruni tells us, begins with a tray of sweets. Durga was legendary in her village for sweet delicacies served at parties, weddings and family dinners, and her genius at cooking had given her some cache with the upper class. She ingeniously convinces a wealthy, selfish woman in Kolkata to pay for Sabitri's college as long as she earned good grades. Sabitri settles into schoolwork and a very isolated life, and she also falls in love with the young son of her benefactor. Unfortunately, Sabitri misjudges many things, and she is summarily dismissed from the situation with nothing but a satchel of her old clothing. This embarrassing failure shapes her life, and a discovery of who she was before she married and became a beloved wife and mother shapes the lives of her daughter Bela and granddaughter Tara. Divakaruni weaves the near past with the distant past and brings us to the present, all in a few chapters spanning over 50 years. She emphasizes the extraordinary importance of heritage and family stories, repeating the proverb Good daughters are fortunate lamps, brightening the family's name. Wicked daughters are firebrands, blackening the family's fame.

FICHTIONChitra Banerjee DivakaruniBefore We Visit the GoddessSimon & SchusterHardcover, 978-1-4767-9200-2 (also available as an ebook, audiobook, and on Audible), 224 pgs., \$25.00April 19, 2016  
"What is more painful, the misplaced past or the runaway future?"  
"It's 1995 and Sabitri, in questionable health, has retired to her ancestral village in India. Receiving a desperate late-night phone call from her estranged daughter, Bela, in Houston, Texas, Sabitri begins a letter to her granddaughter, Tara, who has decided to drop out of college—but Sabitri dies before the letter is mailed. Fast forward to 1998: Tara has dropped out of college and is working in a thrift store in Houston, aimless and disconnected from her Indian heritage and a community that might offer her

support, estranged from her mother and father, never knowing her grandmother. Before We Visit the Goddess, the seventeenth book by American Book Award winner Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, is about dislocation: from family, country, and history; and the inevitable conflict resulting from each successive generation's refusal, or inability, to learn from the mistakes of the previous generation. These women have more in common than they know. The plot is simple and would almost be a comedy of errors if the results weren't so frequently tragic. The narrative, told by multiple characters and varying points of view—sometimes third person, other times first—is challenging as the flow is constantly interrupted by time and space, jumping around between the past, beginning in 1963, and ending up in the future, 2020; and between India, California, and Texas.

On Dr. Chitra Divakaruni's novel, Before We Visit The Goddess: Unlike other books, that are routine, narratives of stories, in a chronological way, books that are thought provoking are chasing one's laziness, and lethargy, in reading a novel, and expect them to run with them, do things, chores, and dream and come back and enjoy what they gathered all along and then again go back and continue re reading to understand the depth of the story and heart of the author. Before We Visit The Goddess, is one such novel, sculpted by Dr. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and lead the reader to run, and swim along as they present the story in different parts of the world, and times, and bringing them all together, in the unity of the Universal Truth, the generosity of the Divine Mother. After reading this book, on hearing the author narrate the excerpts, one cannot but dwell upon this Universal Truth, that the Divine Mother is the reason, and leader of our lives and destiny. Whether one wants to think of the Adi Paraa Sakthi or the mother, who brought them into this world, raised them, trained them, and brought them up, and watched one achieve their dreams, struggle for success, it is mother, the Reason D'ĀfĀtre. This sensitive feeling, like a very delicate wet strand of thread, unites our consciousness, humanity and the World, whether it is East or West, occidental or Oriental, Earth or outer space, living beings or life giving planets and stars. It is that thread, like gravitational pull, keeps the strings in their orbits and choreographs the cosmic dance, with an artistic balance of music, color and splendour!

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