CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, media like movies, TV shows, and online videos play a big role in how viewers see different cultures. Through stories, characters, and visuals, media shows us how people from other backgrounds live. This is called cultural representation, how culture is shown or explained in media. Stuart Hall says that cultural representation is not just about showing reality, but about how media creates meaning through words, pictures, and symbols (1997:16).

When media shows cultures in a fair and full way, it helps people understand each other better. But when media shows only one side of a culture, it can give the wrong idea. For many groups like Indian-Americans, media often repeats the same images such as the nerdy student or the outsider who doesn't fit in (Le, 2020). These TV shows don't show the real lives of Indian-American people, especially young people growing up with two cultures.

The Netflix series *Never Have I Ever*, created by Mindy Kaling**.** It tells the story of Devi Vishwakumar**,** a teenage girl whose family is from India, but who lives in California. The show follows her as she deals with school, friends, her family, and her emotions. Devi is not a stereotype she is funny, smart, emotional, and sometimes makes mistakes. She shows what it's really like to grow up with

both Indian and American cultures. The show uses scenes, symbols, words, and actions to show Indian traditions in a meaningful way not just as background, but as part of who Devi is.

This research focuses on Season 4 Episode 10, titled *"...said goodbye,"* because it is the final episode of the series and shows an important part of Devi's character development. In this episode, Devi faces big life changes, says goodbye to her family and friends, and shows more acceptance of her Indian-American identity. It also includes strong cultural elements like traditional clothes, family traditions, and religious rituals. These scenes help show how Devi lives between two cultures.

Because of that, this study will look at how *Never Have I Ever* represents Indian-American culture through Devi's character in this final episode. It will explore how the show uses storytelling, setting, costume, and dialogue to present culture, and how it avoids stereotypes to show a deeper view of Indian-American life.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How is Indian culture represented through Devi Vishwakumar?

2. How are the Indian-American characters in *Never Have I Ever* represented?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how elements of Indian culture are represented through the character of Devi Vishwakumar.

2. To identify how Indian-American characters are represented in the series *Never Have I Ever*.

1.4 Previous Studies

Several academic works have examined *Never Have I Ever* from different points of view, showing that the series offers rich material for analyzing topics such as emotions, culture, and communication. In the undergraduate thesis titled *The Self-Esteem in Expressive Acts from Never Have I Ever Series* by Ardiningrum, Mukti Arsanti, and Robith Khoiril Umam (2023), the authors students from the English Literature Program at the Faculty of Humanities and Language, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, the researchers investigate how self-esteem is portrayed through expressive acts (Ardiningrum et al., 2023). This thesis is similar because it also studies the same show and how the characters interact. But the main difference is in the topic. Their research talks about emotions and psychology, while this research looks at how Indian culture is shown in Season 4. It studies things like traditions, family life, and how culture is shown through scenes, dialogue, and character behavior. This gives a new way to understand the show by looking at how Indian culture is represented, especially in the final episode.

In her 2023 undergraduate thesis titled *Politeness Strategies in Devi Vishwakumar's Utterances in Never Have I Ever*, Bernadette Nadia Pramesti from the Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University, This study explores Devi's speech patterns, focusing on how she balances assertiveness and cultural expectations while navigating complex social relationships (Bernadette, 2023). The research emphasizes the role of politeness in a multicultural context, showcasing Devi's struggle to maintain harmony without compromising her individuality. The difference is that Pramesti's research analyzes how Devi communicates, while this study explores how her cultural representation is formed. Even though they have different focuses, both studies discuss how Devi deals with her identity in a multicultural environment. Her findings show that communication in the series also reflects cultural values, which links to this research on how culture is represented in the show.

Cultural identity is a central theme In their 2021 research article titled *Biculturalism and Xenocentrism in TV Series Never Have I Ever Season 1*, Selvy Jessica Berliana Br. Silaena and Rifka Pratama from the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, analyze how the main character of the series navigates her bicultural identity and displays xenocentric attitudes. Published in *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies* (Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 18–28). This research discusses Devi's dual cultural identity as an Indian-American, focusing on how biculturalism and xenocentrism influence her behavior and worldview (Silaen & Pratama, 2021). It focuses on how biculturalism (living with two cultures) and xenocentrism (preferring another

culture over one's own) shape her behavior and perspective. While this research uses the same method, it examines Season 4 instead of Season 1. This allows for a comparison of how Devi's cultural identity develops over time, providing insights into her growth and changing relationship with both Indian and American cultures.

Similarly, Priya Dutta, a student at Loyola Marymount University, conducted an honors thesis titled *Ethnic Identity Development and South Asian Stereotypes in "Never Have I Ever"* as part of the University Honors Program in the Department of Communication Studies (Dutta, 2024). They explore how the series challenges and reinforces stereotypes while depicting Devi's journey of self-discovery within her ethnic and cultural heritage. These studies collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of the series' depiction of identity, communication, and culture. Dutta's work highlights how Indian-American culture is represented in the series, which is also the main concern of this thesis.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the cultural representation of Indian-American life through Devi Vishwakumar in *Never Have I Ever* Season 4 Episode 10. Using Bordwell and Thompson's (2013) intrinsic approach, the analysis examines characters, plot, and setting to understand how culture is constructed in the narrative. Extrinsically, Rutledge M. Dennis (2008) biculturalism theory is applied to explore how characters navigate between Indian and American cultural

values. Together, these approaches provide insight into how the series portrays bicultural experiences.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Methods of the Research

This research uses the library research method to collect information. This approach is a structured way of gathering data using specific techniques, tools, and guidelines (George, 2008:1). The data is obtained from various reliable sources, including movie scripts, books, journals, and articles relevant to this study. Additionally, the researcher plays a role in analyzing the series as part of the method. The main source of data is the *Never Have I Ever* Season 4 series Episode 10, supported by its movie script, along with several trustworthy journal articles and books.

1.6.2 Method of the Approach

In this research, the writer uses Abrams' theory Objective Approach to study the main story elements in the series, such as character, setting, plot, and conflict. The writer also uses the theory of Biculturalism by Rutledge M. Dennis, which talks about how people live in and deal with two different cultures..

To strengthen the cinematographic analysis, the research also uses ideas from *Film Art: An Introduction* by Bordwell and Thompson. It is important to include cinematographic elements focusing on camera angles which are important

to understand the feelings and messages in each scene. These elements not only support the visual understanding of the scenes but also help connect the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the study more clearly.

1.7 Organization of Writing

The writer organizes this research into several parts:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, previous studies, scope of the study, research method, organization of the writing

CHAPTER 2: INTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the intrinsic aspects used in the study.

CHAPTER 3: EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the extrinsic theories related to the topic which is biculturalism.

CHAPTER 4: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic in *Never Have I Ever* Season 4, Episode 10.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter gives the final summary and conclusion based on the whole research.

REFERENCES