

REPRESSION AND REASSEMBLED WOMEN IN SELECT SHORT STORIES OF ANJANA APPACHANA

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Received: 07 Apr 2022

Accepted: 22 Jun 2022

Published: 25 Jun 2022

ABSTRACT

Anjana Appachana is a writer of Indian diasporas who lives in Arizona, US the male-controlled and the silence of women along with their anger and revulsion are well revealed in the story. In our tradition mother plays a very significant and central role on all the walks of life and is responsible for the welfare of the whole family by acting out various roles like a manager, guide, philosopher and friend. This study discloses that she does not get time to meet her parents because of the works of the house. This exposes the viciousness and control of the society which thinks that the place of women is limited within the family. This study analysis some of the short stories of Anjana Appachana and find out the elements of tradition and modernity.

KEYWORDS: *Anjana Appachana*

INTRODUCTION

Anjana Appachana is an author who truly interprets and represents Indian middle class women and their lives through her writings. She makes her characters speak about everyday life of Indian culture and society. The theme of her writing mostly concentrates on the existence of women and their quest for identity. Dealing with domestic issues and the societal behavior towards women she succeeds in bringing out the suffocating oppressed environment to which Indian women are more often exposed to. The households and the characters actually are the microcosmic view of Indian society.

Anjana Appachana is one such writer who unfailingly explores the pain and torment in the quelled world of Indian women. Their concerns, desires and dreams form the dominant issue of Anjana Appachana's works. Her protagonists are often seen choked by the domestic, traditional and social confinements; they are ever seen struggling for the survival. In revert of all the duties, responsibility and devotion she extends to society, she is given to manipulation, oppression, suffocation and ultimately, silence. The heart filled with pain, the parched saliva and eyes gleaming with tears need to be out poured but these are always halted in the name of shame and disgrace.

Anjana Appachana is a writer of Indian diaspora who lives in Arizona, USA who has brought out a novel, Listening Now and a collection of short stories "Incantations" and Other Stories. The works prominently deal with the problem of women in the Indian society and their alienation. Her short stories are the perfect description of traditional and modern women. This study analysis some of the short stories of Anjana Appachana and find out the elements of tradition and modernity. Mother is a traditional woman who wants to keep control over her daughters as she is frightened, they might worsen their good name, and as a result of which they will not be married in respectable families. Family, as an

institution was to be found even in the most primeval of human societies in the world. Mothers play quite an important and substantial role in the Indian families. There is a staunch belief that as God cannot be everywhere with everyone on all times, He created mother. Such is our social setup that mothers are placed as equal to god.

William Makepeace Thackeray declares: "Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children". In our Indian tradition mother plays a very significant and central role in all the walks of life of children and on all the spheres of conducting and guiding a family. She manages the family, responsibly brings up children and the development of children and family. In our tradition mother plays a very significant and central role on all the walks of life and is responsible for the welfare of the whole family by acting out various roles like a manager, guide, philosopher and friend. She struggles like anything in the process of building and unifying the family and placing the reputation of the family in a high position and at many times she loses her identity.

Any literature throughout the world irrespective of the language raises mother. Indian literature is not an exception to this point. Irrespective of the genre, our literature promotes and blesses mother. Nissim Ezekiel, one of the poets of Indian English literature narrates an experience of a mother in a scorpion nit night in his poem 'Night of the Scorpion'. The mother was stung by a scorpion. All are curiously to the mother; whereas the mother prays to God for her children and thanks Him for sparing the children's life. Even in the death bed the mother is the only person who thinks about the welfare of the family and the betterment of her children.

Aristotle says, "Mothers are fonder than fathers of their Children." A Mother loves her children above anything else in the world. She avidly cuddles hugs and kisses the infant. A child narrates her experience how far her mother is affectionate to her in "My Only Gods": "Her bed time stories filled me with delight for they were mostly about mothers and children and she would prove how much the mother loved the child by kissing and cuddling me"(5). Often mothers unselfishly sacrifice their joys and sorrows for the sake of their children. They often live for their children. In the same story the mother is recovered from a serious nervous breakdown. The child is not allowed to meet the mother and as a result. The child suffers in solitude. After five days, when the mother is recovered from the sickness, the child meets her mother; her grandma divulges the child: "She was back only because of you. She was back only because of you, she could not live without you" (10).

The narrator textures alone in the family with others; even her husband Siddhartha was also very busy in his works. He does not give her time which she always wishes for and she also does not get the love of her in laws. For this very reason she always feels unhappy and reminisces her past life with her parents where she was very happy. She thinks that she has not gone to her parents' home from a very long time because of the errands of the family. She imagines:

I thought of the monsoon months at home (my home, my parents' home) sitting out on the veranda with Ma and Pa, watching the rain; How long was it since I had gone home? A year. And my parents were just a fifteen-hour journey away by train It seemed an eternity since I had talked to anyone, or anyone had talked to me, I felt so overwhelmingly homesick. Our parents give us such total, unconditional love. Why do we feel we'll always have it?" (Appachana, 13)

This study discloses that she does not get time to meet her parents because of the works of the house. This exposes the viciousness and control of the society which thinks that the place of women is limited within the family. In the story "Her Mother" the mother intervenes through a letter with her daughter who is doing Ph.D. in America. Throughout the letter we can

feel the motherly love. In the opening of the story the daughter has written a letter, the mother reads and she had a “good cry” (162), though all the words in the letter were fine, nice and okay, because of her physical separation of from her daughter. Appachana explains, “The mother let out a moan she could barely control and wept in an agony of longing and frustration” (162).

Mother takes care of the whole family, leaving aside her dreams. She gives shape to the dreams of the family members amidst all her anguish, frustration and dreams. She manages the emotions of all the members in the family. “My mother had dreams other than those of being a good wife and mother. She realized some of her dreams through us, her three daughters” (Appachana17). As a mother, she cares the child throughout the child’s endeavours. In the story, “Her Mother” the mother instructs her daughter to have her meals promptly “Eat properly. Have a plenty of milk, cheese and cereal” (163) Every mother cares for the child to get married and give birth to children. Every Indian mother promptly feels her concerns and duty towards her daughter in the way of bringing them in the family line. In the same story, she hints on the attitude of the heroine’s sister of postponing of having children and she writes. “Until one day when they are as old as your father and me, they will have nothing to look forward to” (164)

In the story “Bahu” Siddharth’s mother is defined as cruel towards her daughter-in-law whereas she is more kind enough towards her daughter and says: “There is no one to indulge my poor child, no one to cook her favourite dishes. She cannot eat from a servant’s hand. Once I cooked for her” (20). Such is the motherly tenderness and concerns When the children are grown up, the mother, want to experience the world through the eyes and experiences of their children and the mother writes to her daughter: “Describe the trees, the buildings, the people Let your mother experience America through your eyes” (167). Thus a responsible mother cares for her children sacrificing all her dreams and joyfulness.

Mother teaches her children how to live eliciting more details form puranas. In the story “My Only Gods,” mother uses the Indian epics and puranas to entertain the child during the nights. The child remembers “My mother told me my bed time stories. She alternate between Ramayana and Children’s stories (2). All Stories have a moral attached to and the morals help the children to live better. In the same story the mother insists that a child should not lie. The Mother detects every mischievous acts of the child and inculcated accordingly. Once the child and her friend Bina burned the matches in the match box in the drive way. The mother identified the naughty acts of the girls and the girl refused at first and finally they accepted. The mother says: “Look into my eyes. God tells me you are lying. Don’t do it again (4).

Mother manages the reactions of her children. Managing excitements and purifying those emotions are the integral part of personality development. In the story “My only Gods” the child describes herself as the queen of all tantrums and the responsibility of bringing back the peace on the face of the child always lays on the mother. Appachana places an inter text within the story and the mother in the story narrates the story ‘Peter Rabbit’ in which the gardener killed the father rabbit; the child started her tantrum for the mother has killed the baba rabbit in the story. The mother goes the extent of apologizing to her daughter. The child in the story explains, “I sat quietly hiccupping on the floor and my mother apologized to me for having laughed” (3). Physical changes are also taken care of by the mother. The mother wants her children to be dressed up neatly. Also the neat dressing up forms the part and parcel of personality. The mother in the story, “Her Mother” who interferes through a letter instructs her daughter to oil hair regularly and writes:

Oil you hair every week and avoid shampoos. Chemicals ruin hair with all the hundreds of shampoos in America, American women’s hair is not a patch of Indian women’s. Your grandmother had thick, black hair till the day she died (163).

Indian tradition demands women to have long thick black hair once the daughter cut off her long thick hair, the suddenness and violation haunted the mother and the mother describes the situation:

“For days he (father) brooded in his chair in the corner of the sitting room almost in mourning avoid up even look up at her, while the mother murmured.

You have perfected the art of hurting us” (164)

Indian mothers train, protect and guide their children on all their endeavours. It is the mother who always interferes in the development of the children rather than the father. With their mother’s guidance and emotional support, the children can successively internalize their femininity or masculinity. As Gita Hariharan elicits: “She was always our anchor rock Never wrong, never to be questioned some self-evident fact of our existence” (16) In the story “Her Mother” the mother sends the proposal of marriage to her daughter. She writes everything in support of getting married, as in the Indian societal set up marriage is considered as the traditional role of women, though it “almost always, annihilates woman” (Beauvoir 496).

Marriage is the instrument of manipulation in the hands of feminist perspectives whereas the mother encourages the daughter to get married and also hints on how to select the bride groom through her letter. She wants the girl to be careful enough while selecting the bride groom. She motivates the girl to marry an Indian and also she gives reason for not selecting an American. “Now these Americans they will divorce you at the drop of a hat. They don’t know the meaning of the phrase, “sanctity of marriage” my love if you marry an American and he divorces you and we are no longer in this world what will you do?” (171) Indian mothers do instruct and guide their children based on their experience. In the story ‘Her Mother’ the mother’s is a love marriage and she instructs her daughter to have an arranged marriage and she narrates:

Firstly the bride is readily accepted by the family now look at me ours was a love marriage and his parents disliked me and disapproved of our marriage. Because my sister had married out of the community they thought I was fast because in those days I played tennis with other man, wore lipstick and bras now in an arranged marriage you can choose not to have liabilities I am not material ting but I am not a fool either. Responsibilities are responsibilities. That is why arranged marriages work. (170–71)

The mothers pre-cautiously instruct the girl about how to live in a refined and hypocritical society like America. “Keep distance from American men you are innocent and have no idea what men are like. There kissing is as casual as holding hands. After that you know what happens one thing can lead to another if there is an Indian association in your university please joins it”. (174–75).The mother suggests a remedy when the girl is in disorder and turmoil, as it may be evident in a sophisticated life in a country like America during the routine transaction of everyday life. If she lives in India with her, she can make her feel comfortable. But she lives in America in isolation. So the mother prescribes to seek the help of God. She writes “Sometimes when one is in trouble and there is no solution for the trouble prayer helps. It gives you the strength to carry on” (177)

The ‘prophecy’ is another story from her ‘Incantations’ and Other Stories. It is the story of about two spinsters, Amrita and Hemalatha. They are studying in a college and residing at the college hostel. Amrita had an illegal sexual relationship with her boyfriend Rakesh and consequently, pre-martially she became pregnant. Amrita and Hemalatha approaches an astrologer instead of consulting a gynaecologist. In India people consult an astrologer before doing any menacing things and fix date related to the stars Indians believe that the planets and stars directly influence their life and they have an impact in their betterment and worsening. So the girls want to consult the astrologer about their future.

On the next day they go to consult a gynecologist for aborting the baby. They travel by as auto rickshaw and reach Dr. Kumar's hospital and there they have a small encounter with Mrs. Metha who comes to meet the gynecologist. The girls uncomplainingly wait till their turn arrives; they goes in and consult Dr. Kumar who gave them some advice. After a few weeks Amrita was hit by measles and the doctor prescribed a course of medicine. Amrita's parents were sent a word by the college authorities; they arrived Naturally she bled and was aborting. She was taken to a hospital by her parents Where she has got treated and discharged after a few days.

Amrita was ejected from college and went with her parents to Bangalore discontinuing her studies. After a few years Hemalatha came to knew that Amrita was married to a wealthy good looking man and have children and she is leading a happy life. "She had no time for letter writing. There had been too much to cope with that first year abortion, her marriage, her first child. And the second year second child. So much for Dr. Kumars advice contraception!" (Appachanna 79). Appachana's stories are the outlet for the tradition and modern aspect of women and femininity. In the short stories under analysis she describes mother as a traditional figure and some modern women and their facets of modernity. This study focuses on mother and daughter relationship in *My Only Gods* and *Her Mother* well represent the feminine predicament from generation gap, age and time point of view. The protagonist of the story *Bahu* is an epitome of the modern woman entangled between the family responsibilities and self-recognition. Unable to decide between the two she walks out of the house as a liberated woman.

Incantations is a remarkable story that presents the feminine predicament to the fullest extent the characters of Sangeeta and Geeti become the archetype of the subaltern in the modern society. The male-controlled and the silence of women along with their anger and revulsion are well revealed in the story. In my author, represents the different angles, conflicts and quandaries of modern Indian women intertwined between traditional out look of a woman and the modern society with a change in culture in many aspects. The characters of her stories follow the official procedure courageously with all their failures and triumphs. By emphasizing an assumed attitude for solving the societal problems, Anjana intimidates the value system of the tradition. Most of her stories have one point in common that it all present female quandary to the readers but by no means ruled by the author's feminism. Besides, the presentation of her subject matter is unique but at the same time it is memorable, distant, excellent, and identifiable.

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