

## *CHAPTER-II*

### *SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN IN SILENCE*

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## Subjugation of Women in Silence

Indian society characterises women as ideally warm, gentle, dependent and submissive. Family life and work patterns convey the idea that women should be subordinate to and dependent on men. As quoted in *Hunter College Women's Studies Collective*, "Day and night women must be kept in subordination to the males of the family; in childhood to the father, in youth to her husband, in old age to her sons . . . . Even though the husband be destitute of virtue . . . he must be worshipped as god" (68).

According to the Hindu philosophy, women had no right to study the Vedas and so literacy became a rare quality in women. The Digambara Jains hold the view that women can never attain salvation except by being reborn as men. These are the views thrust upon women by the male-dominated society. But it was not so in the Pre-Aryan age when woman was free and equal to man. It was only in the middle ages down to the present that the male-ordained moralist society raised four walls for her to prohibit her from the rights equal to man.

Woman's position in the family as well as in the society keeps on changing all through the ages and is almost invariably an inferior one. She is hardly given any freedom. Shantha Krishnaswamy, explaining the position of woman in society, in her book entitled *The Woman in Indian Fiction in English* points out that

She [woman] is a creature who as a child is sold off to strangers for a bridal price, or when she grows up, serves as a supplier of dowry for

husband's family, who as a widow, in a final act of obliteration immolates herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre to be acclaimed as 'Sati-Savitri' as an immortal. (16)

It was only in the early decades of the twentieth century that social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jotiba Phule started new movements to reform the society and the condition of women in India. The western influence, coming through liberal education forced new values and norms of life upon women. When it became a life of political, cultural and social change, women were encouraged to be a part of the stirring movement though they spent most of their time in the family. But the dominance of male and the submissive nature of woman had been embedded so deeply into the Indian psyche. The opportunities and rights given to woman remain only in word. The male-dominated society does not want her to be equal to man. The mentality of men is shaped in such a way that they cannot believe in woman being equal to them.

Anjana Appachana has made her debut as a writer of fiction with the publication of *Incantations and Other Stories*. This collection of evocative, mostly women-centered narratives explores the dynamics of relationship more particularly man-woman relationship in the changing mood of modern social order. Its chief contribution is to explore the moral and psychic dilemmas and repercussions of the women characters along with their efforts to cope with the challenges and achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings. Appachana's "My Only Gods", "Bahu", "The Prophecy", "When Anklets Tinkle", "Incantations" and "Her Mother" consist of sensitive and

sensuous women characters who are the victims of marital disharmony, sexual harassment and male-dominance. Appachana has given voice to these women's feelings and problems. Appachana is primarily concerned with the intriguing problems and the suffocation environs of her female protagonists, who struggle hard in the cruel and callous male-dominated society to discover their true identity as daughter, wife, mother and above all, as human beings. Appachana has always been focussing her attention on the problems and conditions of the middle-class. She highlights the typical world of experiences of the middle-class Indian women.

Appachana's "My Only Gods", the first story of the collection depicts a girl child's world in which her parents are her only gods. It deals exclusively with the mother-daughter relationship. As the concept of mother is central to life and society, Appachana has treated it with utmost care and concern through the portrayal of the mother character. The child's obsessive attachment to her mother directs the progress of the story. The mother is ideal in taking care of her home as well as her daughter. "The word 'mother' connotes love, affection, selfless devotion and all that is noble in human nature" (Chaubey 107).

The relationship between mother and daughter is characterised by the motherly qualities. It is generally conceived as the most sacred bond replete with care and concern. The same kind of representation is found in the literature as well of the earlier times, since literature is a mirror to the society in which it is written and received. The role of the mother has been extolled even in ancient epics and scriptures. Swami Vivekananda has eulogised motherhood stating that "The ideal of womanhood in India is motherhood that is marvelous, all suffering,

unselfish, even forgiving mother . . . . the mother is the ideal of life, she rules the family, she possesses the family” (58). Thus motherhood has been glorified and celebrated since times immemorial. Even the Gandhian movement in India, which had the objective of emancipating women, projected mother as a self-effacing, sacrificing person.

Mother is a revered figure. Mother is considered a source and fountain-head of incessant love. Motherly love has been represented in both religious and social documents in the limelight, as uncompromising and consistent. Through such representations of woman as mother, a very strong stereotype is born called motherhood. The ideology of motherhood is to show mothering as innate or natural to women by its ceaselessly glorified representations.

The responsibility of mothering and its tenderness are considered as the principal defining attributes of a woman. Such types of stereotypical representations are strengthened by their recurrence in literature and carried out from generation to generation. But with the emergence of intellectual and philosophical revolutions, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, representation of motherhood has also radically changed. Recent observations of women writers have questioned and challenged the socially constructed phenomenon called motherhood. It is realised that woman as a mother is expected to give up her individuality.

Mother is the repository of all positive values that influence the quality of life and ultimately and substantively transform the society. Judith Wright, one of

the best known poets in Australian literature writes on life-giving and to quote lines from her poem "Woman to Child":

I wither and you break from me;  
 Yet though you dance in living light  
 I am the earth, I am the root,  
 I am the stem that fed the fruit,  
 The link that joins you to the night. (32)

Life giving is stamped on the nature of a woman. A mother's womb is the first home of every child. Womb provides life, shelter, food, protection, warmth and coziness. God intends life giving as a dominant theme in every woman's life. Life gives lift the level of civilisation above mere existence.

Appachana's mother influences her daughter in all ways. The daughter who is now twenty five years old ponders over the memory of her childhood days. She has resided with her mother and grandparents while her father was in the army. The mother has spent most of her time in engaging herself with domestic chores. She is a traditional wife, mother and a pious woman. Appachana portrays the mother as a person who is good at embroidery and gardening. It is revealed through the daughter's words: "My mother's embroidery all over the house, brilliant hues of red and gold and green, like the sarees she wore . . ." (1).

The mother has fully acquired her identity as a mother. She is known for her maternity, spirituality, goodness, protection, growth and nurturance. Appachana enhances the mother character with maternal instinct. During the mother's pregnancy, everybody in the family expected that the baby would be

beautiful. But the baby girl has not been to their expectation. She “had none of the family’s beauty”(4). When everybody gets disappointed, the mother remains proud enough to state that her daughter was a healthy child.

Day and night the mother explains how much she loves her daughter. She has been good at narrating bed-time stories that fill her daughter with delight because “. . . they were mostly about mothers and children and she would demonstrate how much the mother loved the child by kissing and cuddling . . .” (5) her daughter.

Appachana in order to show the daughter’s attachment to her mother narrated that when her mother has been admitted in hospital due to her sickness she “. . . wandered from room to room, looked for her in the bathroom, in the kitchen, under the beds and in the cupboards, finally shutting . . . [herself] in her wardrobe, smelling her among her sarees, her talcum powder smell” (10).

Nitya Nand in his introduction to *The Plays of Tennessee Williams* states that “the love and warmth imparted by the parents is the most crucial and pervasive of all the influences exerted in the home”. The fundamental benevolence of the mother helps not only her daughter to develop confidence but also in others. According to Chodorow, “The capacity of nurturing others is developed in women as an aspect of their relational identity” (3). The mother’s attachment helps her daughter to build and strengthen the connection between them, which is the foundation for discipline.

Mother is highly respected everywhere and her image is buttressed by myth, legend, religion and tradition. The concept of mother has been treated with

utmost care and concern in philosophy, religion and literature. She is the cultural sanctifier, the redeeming force and the sustainer of life. Appachana's portrayal of mother in "My Only Gods" is remarkable as she is the one who not only fulfils a child's physical needs but also provides the child love and security through her confirming presence.

Women are defined and represented by society at large within literature in accordance with their roles as wives and mothers. Over the past two centuries, the institution of motherhood has offered women both expanded and restricted possibilities for personal satisfaction and social activity, a paradox already evident in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where insistence upon women's participation in civic society is inseparable and their prime responsibilities are maternal. Appachana thus highlights the maternal responsibilities of the mother figure.

The fact that the mother is an ordinary human being with her own passions and emotions is miserably ignored in the patriarchal society. K.R. Sujatha and S. Gokilavani in their book entitled *Feminine Aesthetics of Indian Women Writers* hold the view that

The nature of motherhood is dependent on the cultures and societies that have moulded them. Indian motherhood is inculcated in the woman from the day of her birth. She is raised to look forward to nothing else and she rates her worth by her efficiency to fulfil this role. (147)

Anjana Appachana's "Her Mother" also deals with the mother-daughter relationship. In her introduction to *The Inner Courtyard* the editor Lakshmi

Holmstrom mentions that “the short story seems to impose certain conditions: identity, concentration, suggestiveness, surprise” (qtd. in Unnithan 223). “Her Mother” certainly lives up to this description. The story describes the character of the mother succinctly. It challenges the ideal mother-daughter relationship.

The story is in the form of a mother’s letter to her daughter. As she has to cope with pain all her life as her daughter is sexually exploited by her brother-in-law and has left her home to the USA so as to escape from her distress, the letter is interspersed with the mother’s description of her thoughts, her worries and wishes. The choice of her words and the description of her environment give the impression that the mother must be a well-educated woman. However, she is full of prejudices and stereotypes.

Eat properly. . . Eating badly makes you age fast . . . don’t start these stupid western dieting fads . . . you must bathe every day, regardless of how cold it gets. People there can be quite dirty. . . . How we worry . . . had you gone abroad with a husband, we would have been at peace . . . but now? . . . We are not forcing you into a marriage you don’t want. But you must keep an open mind. . . . Perhaps when you marry you will realise that fathers and husbands are two different things . . . In an arranged marriage you will not be disillusioned, because you will not have any illusions to begin with. . . . (163-171)

The story is full of ‘rantings’. Appachana gives voice to the mother’s nameless longings and resentments, desires and frustrations, thus legitimising the agonies rooted deep in her life. In the story that evolves from the mother’s

reminiscences and writings, it becomes clear that the two women — the mother and her daughter are from two different schools of thought. Here the mother is a traditional Indian wife and mother, looking after her daughters and husband.

The mother is figured in a stereotyped way of traditional Indian wife. She is represented as the ‘Other’— a subordinate creation. Million of women across India are required to subjugate their lives and voluntarily give up their individual liberties for the benefit of their husbands, families, society and community. They are seen flitting throughout their lives in their biological roles as nurturers, simultaneously endeavouring to placate their spouses through a myriad servile ways that only stress their position as the second sex. They are expected to be groomed in the art of docility. It relates to an ingrained norm of conduct that is characteristic of the subtle codes and conventions steeped in the age-old ideals of womanly compromise, adjustment and adaptability, and most importantly, silence even in the midst of straits.

In Appachana’s story “Her Mother”, the mother character serves the ‘good woman’ stereotype — “the patient wife, the mother/martyr, and the lady” (Donavan 214). The mother believes that one’s personal values should not be in disagreement with societal roles. As an example of such principles, she explains to her daughter about the compromises that she has made to fit in within the societal standards. The mother reinforces her place within this category and she does not want her daughter to be a “liberated” woman whom she situated to be used as a moral lesson. Pointing out the heavy toll of being liberated she retorts,

“And talking of women’s rights, some women take it too far”. She looks askance at Mrs.Parekh who is “having a torrid affair with a married man” (168).

The mother is totally immersed in domesticity and child-rearing, facing up to the monotonous tasks as

. . . dusted, cooked , cleaned, rearranged cupboards, polished the brass, put buttons on shirts and falls on sarees, as she sympathized with her neighbour’s problems and scolded the dhobi for not putting enough starch on the sarees, as she reprimanded the milkman for watering down the milk and lit the kerosene stove because the gas had finished, as she took the dry clothes from the clothes-line and could not press them because the electricity had failed and realized that the cake in the oven would now never rise.(165)

She has managed to survive within the confines of her nurturing self as wife and mother. As her letter to her daughter progresses, more is revealed about the mother who voluntarily gives up her prerogatives so that her family members would have theirs. She is a woman who “once dreamt of love and a large home, silk and saris and sapphires” (164). As she takes up the responsibilities of her family, she finds love but “the rest she did not” (164). She has been overlooked, ignored and reduced to insignificance.

The mother’s husband provides little comfort to her. Like most of the husbands in the stories of Appachana, he is insensitive to his wife’s loneliness and distress and domestically incompetent. When the daughter does not want marriage, the father blames the mother who has not taught her daughter “how to

cook or sew and had only encouraged her and her sister to think and act with independence” (165). The father does not realise the fact that he is also responsible in rearing up their children. The mother could not blame her husband for his irresponsibility.

At the end of the story, the mother is unable to console her daughter. She falls back into the usual pattern of cajoling and plans to emotionally blackmail the daughter, “I have to see you before I die” (178). The mother becomes a weak and submissive character who adapts and compromises with the societal situations of the patriarchal society. Sudhir Kakar in his article entitled “Feminine Identity in India” mentions that “girls and women in a dramatically patriarchal society will turn the aggression against themselves and transform the cultural devaluation into feelings of worthlessness and inferiority” (qtd. in Unnithan 226).

Appachana’s another story entitled “Bahu” puts forth the deterioration of harmony in husband-wife relationship wherein the husband and his family members never consider the personal pursuits of the woman protagonist. “Bahu” picturises the state of a woman who lost everything through marriage. The story deals with the life of a young woman, who marries with many hopes and rosy dreams, and with expectations of love, but when she moves into her husband’s home, she finds herself in a hostile atmosphere. Every woman expects her husband to treat her with the same love and understanding as she does. Apart from the material comforts, she wants him to understand her emotional needs. The protagonist of “Bahu” expects it from her husband Siddharth and but it all ends in

disappointment. Bahu is the epitome of the plight of women who are the victims of marital disharmony.

Marriages in India decide the destiny of Indian women. Caste, wealth and family status play a prominent role in traditional Indian marriages. After marriage, Bahu moves away from the known and familiar atmosphere to a new and strange place. It takes time for the bride to adjust with the new atmosphere and hence it is the responsibility of her husband and the in-laws to understand and cope with her moods and temperaments. Bahu is controlled and conditioned by her husband and her family members. The moment her husband and his family members fail to understand Bahu starts marital disharmony.

Bahu, the protagonist, is a working woman. She is the servant-substitute in her husband's home. She is loaded with responsibilities and is exhausted. After marriage, she has no time to visit her parents. She often ponders over the days when she loved Siddharth. She has lost her parent's unconditional love to marry Siddharth whose gentleness and tenderness captured her heart. She says that

He was what I had always dreamt of, the man who would be my friend, my companion, my lover. Mine would not be one of 'those marriages'. I saw them all around me, marriages where neither shared the other's dreams, speaking to each other only of their children, rising prices, the cost of vegetables and fruits – they never spoke of each other. (17)

Marriage, instead of liberating her, imprisons and stifles her. The bondage that she has to bear becomes more complex and intricate. The daily domestic and marital hardships that she confronts disillusion her. The post marital demands

from her husband and his family cause great anxiety within her. Her life is reduced to that of a puppet or a toy. She has no independent existence.

When she conceives, the in-laws expect a male baby. In a patriarchal society, the birth of a female child is traditionally less welcome than that of the male. Being born a boy is itself a privilege. They start talking of the custom of getting gifts from Bahu's parents. If the baby is a boy, Bahu's parents will have to spend twelve thousand rupees on gifts. This is the demand of Siddharth's family. When Bahu questions her husband, he immediately answers as "whether I agree or not is immaterial. If it has to be done, it has to be done" (24).

Unfortunately Bahu has had a miscarriage and completely lost her strength. So the sister of her husband cooks for them. The mother-in-law is biased. She wants her daughter-in-law to do all the household activities though she is a working woman, but the case is different when her daughter is working in the kitchen. She yells that "my heart is breaking to see my poor daughter working in the kitchen. . . . She is making chappatis with her own hands for us" (24).

Woman becomes woman's worst enemy. One cannot overlook this aspect of womanhood in India, where women as mothers-in-law perpetrate indignation on their daughters-in-law. Appachana finds fault only with men, because they are easily influenced and are not stable and strong minded. Woman is a cause for a woman's fall. The mother-in-law is patriarchal and stands as a cause to suppress another woman's desire. Appachana conveys the message that suppression, subjugation and exploitation exist because men do not consider or take their wives

to be their better half. Appachana firmly believes that there cannot be a change in the society unless and until men understand women.

Husband and wife are equal partners of their household in every respect, but in most cases the Indian wives are not treated on par with their male partners. Husbands, considering their wives as their subordinates, give little importance to their feelings and emotion but the wives are expected to understand the feelings and emotions of their husbands. Siddharth thinks his wife to be a nag when she constantly complains about her mother-in-law's ill-treatment. In his words, "You've become a nag, he said, and I went cold with horror. . . My father called my mother a nag. . ." (26). Siddharth would tell her that she was a 'good' bahu only when she touched every one's feet to get their blessings. A husband expects his wife to be at his feet.

In Indian context, once a girl gets married to a man, the husband dominates her. If the wife does not conform to the norms and ideals set by the husband, there is disharmony and tension between them resulting in misunderstanding. This seems to be inevitable when women and men fail to build up relationships based on mutual communication, companionship and equality.

True marriage according to Appachana is relation based on mutual trust and recognition between individuals. If the partners of a marriage do not enjoy mutual love, trust and understanding there is no point in their staying together as husband and wife. Bahu decides to leave her husband's home when she realises that her husband has no love and affection for her. Appachana makes the same expression as Nayantara Sahgal's that "two people who . . . happened to live

under the same roof without any intimacy between them cannot hope for a happy and lasting marriage” (Suneel 11). The conflict springs resulting in the estrangement of individuals. Bahu asserts her individuality and realise the kind of freedom she gains once she leaves her husband.

Adjustment and compromise are, no doubt the signs of the maturity but every compromise shatters Bahu’s own individuality. The never-ending series of compromises makes her realise that “it’s not that life is cruel, but that in the process of our birth we submit to life’s cruelty” (qtd. in Kukreti 193).

Anjana Appachana’s “When Anklets Tinkle” also centres around family relationships — particularly the relationship between husband and wife and the latter’s dilemmas and conflicts. The story highlights the issues raised in a male-dominant Indian society and how the two women characters such as Mrs. Srivastava and Sita ki amma are suppressed and lose their identities as wives. Women in general have been forced to occupy a secondary place, placing them in a dependent status whereas men assume the positions of purposeful control because the social and familial structures are in their favour. To quote Beauvoir, “Now, woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave, the two sexes have never shared the world of equality and even today woman is heavily handicapped” (352).

Mrs. Srivastava is the mother of the protagonist namely Namita. She is confined to kitchen. She often questions herself “Was there ever any retirement from cooking” and cleaning?”(82). She shows her interest in discussing about general matters though she has seen only the kitchen. Her intelligent discourse

with Rao, her tenant reveals her worldly knowledge. But her husband Mr.Srivastava could not tolerate it. Mrs.Srivastava incorporates a great part, tutoring the children, managing the house, working as a school teacher and saving enough to partly pay for their house whereas her husband spends his time always at puja room. "His prayers had kept him in ignorance; in ignorance of her suffering, in ignorance of her pain, in ignorance of the injustice of it all" (91). This ignorance throws Mrs.Srivastava into female acceptance and endurance. It paves her no way to reach her own identity.

Appachana portrays Sita ki amma as a machine that produced babies every year. Sita ki amma , the wife of Ramsaran, the Srivstavas' servant has been always found pregnant. She is reduced to the level of a breeding machine. She has been looked upon just as a 'breeding animal'. She becomes both physically and mentally feeble. When sterilisation is insisted at the time of the Emergency, Ramsaran and Sita ki amma have hidden themselves in Srivastava's house. The thought of having a male child blinds Ramsaran in understanding his wife's health condition. Mrs.Srivstava advises Sita ki amma to have herself operated on, being a woman she could understand the pain of another woman. Sita ki amma agrees to do so without her husband's knowledge. Her suffering ends only when she has had a boy child, a caesarean, after a prolonged and painful labour.

Her male-ordained husband thrashes his wife when Mrs.Srivastava appreciates that "his wife was a far more scrupulous cleaner than him and kept the house like a woman should." He is not able to accept his wife who is excelling in her work than her husband. Appachana exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the

modern Indian male as Ramsaran, who takes Sita ki amma for granted to be an object in his life to provide physical enjoyment, social companionship, and domestic comfort. This relationship is purely mechanical and superficial without any feeling of affection and tenderness.

The inability to explore personal pursuits is yet another source of misery for these two women. Their never-ending household servitude and countless pregnancies crushed their desire to be free. As a significant theme, Appachana projects in the text the men's ignorance of their wives' suffering and insensitivity toward their wants and desires. Anjana Appachna also exposes the exploitation of women by the male chauvinistic Indian society, wherein women are assigned only two jobs such as baking bread and begetting progeny.

The women continue to stay back and accept the roles of procreators and nurturers. They finally give up their independence. Appachana discovers that women are treated as non-entities. The much spoken about freedom and identity of women are only delusions. To her, women's liberation continues to be a distant dream and a lot has to be done to realise the desired goals.

In the institution of marriage, as R.S.Pathak states in his book entitled *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*, a couple could be compared to "a pair of bullocks yoked together" (21). The image of a pair of bullocks yoked together suggests a world of meanings. It means that the bullocks so yoked together share the burden between themselves but no one knows whether they love each other or not. The image of the beasts performing the duty mechanically undermines the relationship between husband-wife, who are supposed to be united in marriage for love and

not for leading a mechanical life terminating in mutual hatred and distrust. A woman's happiness depends not just on providing everything in terms of comforts and luxuries but there is something beyond materialistic comforts that she needs. This affection one can get only with love but not with material or money. The husbands belonging to the male dominant society lack love and affection. It leads to marital dissonance.

Appachana further throws light on sexual exploitation of Indian women. Striking a chord that could be understood by women around the world, "The Prophecy" deals with the problems and troubles faced by young women. Her story stirs a call to all women not to be victimised by their sex and demand to be what they are. It is a story of unconditional love faced with betrayal and rejection, a story of a young female student, Amrita who finds herself pregnant amidst the oppressive atmosphere of a residential school. The loss of her foetus and the near loss of her life does not dissuade the superintendent from her role as a caretaker of young girls' virtues. The young woman leaves the school with barely her life, to return to the home of her parents and rebuilds her self by burying the past.

"The Prophecy" whirls around two women characters namely Amrita and Hemalatha who are in hostel and studying. The influence of western culture has blinded Amrita and makes her forget her state as a woman who is brought up on the traditional Indian soil and becomes victimised. A miscarriage ruins her hope of an unfettered future. She has been shipped back to Bangalore and thereby surrenders her life to marriage and motherhood. It is the only solution that her parents can afford to her. Amrita slips despairingly into a state of acceptance.

The life of Amrita gives a wake-up call to her friend Hemalatha. Hemalatha has had a chance of negotiating her future more cautiously. Hemalatha believes that "Marriage would be that wondrous path of rapid heartbeats and unending, intimate discoveries" (70). She "was beautiful but enigmatic, virginal, but willing to surrender it all to the man . . ." she marries. "If it happened before marriage he would not respect . . ." her (70).

Domesticity and inner geography are defined as the female space and so both the females contend themselves beginning a new life with an unknown husband. In the context of Indian culture, marital bonds assume great significance since the familial ties are considered sacred in our country. All successful and satisfying bonds are based on a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial. To sustain the sanctity of marriage, only the women struggle a lot than men. Various journeys enable men to directly communicate with and explore the outside world and they in turn communicate this to the women. Thus the women are totally excluded from the world of adventure, excitement, discovery and experience. But they enter into the world of acceptance, endurance and silence. Their silence is probably the silence of the ages. The critics infer "that the silences result from circumstances of being born into wrong sexual category where the contingent forces are adverse as education is denied and economic dependent prevails" (qtd. in Rathore 239).

"Incantations" is another significant story, in which one gets glimpses of Anjana's concern for women who become victims of sexual violence. Through the portrayal of Sangeeta, Anjana reveals how women's silence and their reluctance to rebel against injustice bring them great sorrows and sufferings. Sangeeta

undergoes a psychic trauma due to an untoward incident that has happened a couple of days prior to her marriage with Nikhil. Sangeeta is raped by Nikhil's brother, Abhinay but she does not want to convey this to her parents fearing that the marriage may be stopped and there by a stigma attached to her and her family. Hence she allows the nuptial ceremony with Nikhil to be solemnised. Her brother-in-law, encouraged by her passiveness and silence continues to abuse her sexually even after her marriage which invokes strange ideas about her husband's normal relationship with her. It is revealed when Sangeeta conversed with her younger sister, ". . . every morning when Nikhil was away on work, Abhinay raped her . . ." (120). This makes her detest her husband as well. Sangeetha experiences terrible anxiety and goes to the extent of killing herself and also the gruesome brother-in-law. She does not have the courage to rebel against such an inhuman act of her bother-in-law. She never raises her hands to defend her.

The younger sister Geeti on hearing her sister's suffering is tortured by nightmares, terror, and rage. This is the cause of her withdrawal from marriage. Later Geeti is told that Sangeeta's death is a suicide. Overwhelmed by grief, the family move away from the city, away from family and friends which is an attempt to escape the truth.

The now-grown sister Geeti recollects the tragedy of her sister's sexual exploitation and death; she tries to make sense of her loss. Uncomprehending still, she turns to her religious beliefs in an attempt to find an explanation, though lacking in true conviction. Geeti concludes that

Ah the promise of our next births where we can atone for the sins committed in this one, accept our suffering in this birth, believing all our pain is our karma for the sins committed in the last one. There is much to say for Hindu philosophy, for belief brings with it acceptance and hope.

(135)

She longs for the optimism that would allow her to know her sister again in another life, and for this reason she says, "I pray, just in case" (136).

Appachana wants the mother to become conscious that mere emotion and pampering spoils the child. Reason, in addition to emotion, should be applied in the upbringing of a child. Apart from these, there are times when a child needs only the mother, and no one else. The mother should delicately handle such situations. The conversation between the mother and Mala Mousi in the story "Incantations" reflects this:

Ma: You're a gynaecologist. Check her up.

Mousi: What do you mean, check her up! She's your daughter for heaven's sake, and having her periods isn't a disease. The poor child.

Ma: Mala, beti, please talk to her.

Mousi: Didi, you're being totally irresponsible. The poor child needs you, not me. (125)

The mother adopts an escapist attitude thinking that fate is the determiner of everything. The mother is the typical, traditional middle-class woman who believes in the necessity of marriage and leaves the rest to fate. Geeti describes her mother as a woman, ". . . who had marriage and babies and was fat,

comforting, unexciting, exacting, loving, practical, oozing security and discontentment” (124).

The story provides a comprehensive review of the problems that women confront. Women are deprived not only of equality with men but also exploited by them as in the case of Sangeeta who is portrayed as a helpless victim of the conspiracies hatched by men. Appachana highlights and exposes the hypocrisy, selfishness, sham moral standards and the sadism latent in the metropolitan middle class men. Women play crucial roles in the plot. Appachana creates sympathy towards the women characters in her writing.

The traditional Indian society has been patriarchal resulting into the subordination, marginalisation and commodification of women. Even the Indian epics bear it out. Woman is enjoined by the Indian scriptures to play a certain role and not to transcend it. Woman has always been supposed to be subordinate to man. This predicament of the Indian woman is best represented in the short stories of Anjana Appachana.

A woman is treated more as an object than as a subject and in this process, she is denied freedom and dignity. The evaluation of the role of an Indian woman within the institution called marriage which is considered to be the holiest of the holy in our society definitely provides a novel point of view showing that women are still slaves to their male owners. Through the female characters such as the mother in “My Only Gods”, Amrita and Hemaltha in “The Prophecy”, the mother-in-law and Bahu in “Bahu”, Mrs.Srivastava and Sita ki amma in “When Anklets Tinkle”, the mother, Sangeeta and Geeti in “Incantations” and the mother

in “Her mother”, Appachana deftly highlights the repressions and oppressions faced by women in the name of marriage. They accept and endure whatever the male-dominant society gives in silence.

In a male-dominated society, man is central and woman is the ‘Other’, repressed, ignored and pushed to the margins and her ardent wish is to be recognised as a human being. A perceptive reading of Anjana’s short stories — “My Only Gods”, “The Prophecy”, “Bahu”, “When Anklets Tinkle”, “Incantations” and “Her mother” shows that Anjana as an Indian woman writer, has probed into the landscape of the Indian women’s psyche to discover that they are victimised by their own preposterousness. She sympathises with these women who have made their lives a tragic waste due to their anxiety to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. For them marriage does not turn out to be a companionship or equality for women; rather it is a trap which negates their rights to individuality, independence and self-realisation. It thwarts the growth of their individuality. In marriage, a man enjoys both the worlds of home and of career. Marriage to him means enlargement and confirmation of his existence. It permits him progression and self-advancement. A woman on the other hand is virtually reduced to the status of a maid.

Anjana Appachana portrays her women characters in dismal and dreadful conditions. She wants to build a harmonious relationship between man and woman in a spirit of give-and-take, in a mood of compromise and reconciliation on both the sides. Man and woman are like the two wheels of a chariot, and that no chariot can move forward if either of the wheels goes out of order. A proper

co-ordination and a reasonable mutual understanding between husband and wife are essentials for a happy married life.

Appachana's stories are the critique of the patriarchal modes of thinking which subordinate women to men in familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic domains. This patriarchal ideology teaches women to internalise these concepts in the process of their socialisation. "Traditional expectations of the family, obligations to society, snatching away of the individual freedom, exploitation and hypocrisy . . . perpetuated in the name of matrimony . . . only resulted in the identity crisis".(Pathak 24).

The entrenched patriarchal structure still continues to control and restrict the lives of women in one way or the other. It still considers that women are someone's daughters, wives or mothers, minus their own personality. Before marriage they are brought up under strict control according to the traditional code with the view that they are to be given to the new master, their husband. As Dey in his article entitled "Woman as Object: The Feminine Condition in a Decadent Patriarchy" comments that "Patriarchy, which is the ruling social system almost all over the world, ordains that woman's place is the home, her role as a wife and mother is quite often synonymous with her total human existence" (9).

The patriarchal practices are further perpetuated by myths and traditions which unfortunately have been embedded in the fabric of every society. According to V.A. Novarra in "International Women's Year 1975", the myth related to the role of a woman in Britain prescribes that "a mother should devote herself to providing a secure environment for her children. A married woman

cannot pursue her career which demands mobility” (317). In India, a woman is considered to be an embodiment of sacrifice and silent suffering. She should be virtuous, chaste, submissive, homely, graceful, and devoted to her husband and family. She must seek pleasure in these relationships. Thus, the greatest crisis for a woman as Rukmini Bhaya Nair in “Margins, Ma(i)nstream” explains:

A woman is a thing apart  
 She is bracketed off, a  
 Comma, semi-colon, at most  
 A lower-case letter, lost. (131)

This attitude exemplifies the belief that woman should not have any right of her own; that she has only duties in relation to man. The traditional and tabooed Indian society provides little scope for the independent growth of woman. Consequently, a woman undergoes a number of restrictions and inhibitions. It totally negates the great wisdom and courage displayed by our women folk. It is not easy for women to cast aside the garb of ‘secondary’ and acquire human status. A search for ‘self’ is necessary in distracting male ordained society. Women still need to realise their strength and potential to earn their identity. Self-assertion and resistance will win the battle for women.

Appachana portrays the sufferings and deprivation of feminine life by presenting the characters — the mother figures, Sangeeta, Mrs. Srivastava, Sita ki amma, Amrita and Hemalatha — as stereotyped representatives of traditional womanhood. She assertively exhibits that women should have an assertive individuality which includes the ability to take decision about their life and carry

them out with a sense of responsibility. Within the societal roles of wife, daughter and mother, she can be herself by erasing her conditioning and freeing her from her inhibitions.