

CHAPTER-III

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The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times, through the low points of the medieval period to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. Scholars believe that in ancient India, women enjoyed equal status with men in all spheres of life. Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women played a pivotal role in the Vedic culture and were given an opportunity to reach their real potential in life. Unfortunately the position of women deteriorated during the medieval period due to the outside influences that had crept in because of the foreign invaders either militarily or culturally. Since then women have often been victims of male oppression and treated like beasts of burden. As a result, women's individual selves lack recognition and hence self-effacement is the only option left to them.

With the achievement of political empowerment in real life, women in literature have gained strength, voice and capacity to raise the banner against oppression, humiliation, exploitation and injustice. Balaram Das, a well known poet in Orissa in the 16th century had brought forth the concept of domination of women in a strictly patriarchal society. In the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahashweta Devi, Jainendra Kumar and a few other writers, the role of women in Indian politics is the focus of their writing. Writers like Arita Pritam, Kusum Ansal, Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Leela

Kasturi, Sharmila Rege and Vidyut Bhaghat have always tried to reflect on women's changing roles with increasing political powers. With the evolution of women empowerment, every kind of Indian literature evolves to express it through the literary voice and to recognise and celebrate the achievement.

Gender issues and women empowerment have attracted greater attention in the recent Indian English literature and literature in regional languages. R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Mulgonkar, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandya, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Uma Vasudev, Gita Hariharan, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai have with great concern dealt with the issues of women empowerment in most of their works. They have portrayed women with a voice of their own, a voice that had been suppressed time and again. It has always been assumed that the position of women can not be improved unless they realise their power and involve in decision-making. They need to be self-assertive and sensitised to play their roles in the domain.

Woman in Indian social set up has received different treatment at different times. In the pre-independence era, woman was predominantly mild, docile and submissive with no choices to lead her life. She was compelled to accept the norms set up by the traditional male-dominated society. The ill practices of child marriage, sati and denial of education were imposed on her. She was the 'object' who had to look attractive and obey the dictates of her male counterpart. She was dependent for her survival and well being of her father, husband or son. The post independence era gave a new meaning to the role assigned to a woman. Education

and changing social conditions paved way for the emergence of a 'New Woman' on the Indian social horizon. This 'New Woman' is strong-willed, self assertive, independent and free from her traditional, social and moral constrictions and is able to live with a heightened sense of dignity. She is aware of herself as an individual and can boldly face the adversities of life with determination and conviction.

The post-independent women short story writers has decided to throw away their veil which has covered all their mental abilities and accomplishments. They have decided to move out of the four walls and go into the world with a new confidence and determination. However they face a lot of hurdles created not only by men but also by other women. There are a lot of actions and reactions. Lakshmi Kannan in her article entitled "To Grow or Not to Grow" comments that ". . . a woman . . . wrestles with a host of obstinate paradigms and syndromes, precipitated by . . . the myths, legends or the collective memory of the inherent conservative elements within a community. . ." (31). Anjana Appachana has captured this situation in her short stories like "Bahu", "When Anklets Tinkle", "Incantations", "Her Mother", "Sharmaji" and "Sharmaji and the Diwali Sweets" with an aim to secure equal rights and opportunities for woman in the male dominated society.

Women started realising that they are fettered by the stereotyped roles that the society has conferred upon them. In the poem "The Old Playhouse", Kamala Das writes:

It was not to gather knowledge

Of yet another man that I came to you
 But to learn what I was, and by learning,
 To learn to grow, but every lesson you gave me about yourself.

.....

You called me wife,
 I was taught to break saccharine into your tea
 And to offer at the right moment the vitamins.
 Covering beneath your monstrous ego
 I ate the magic loaf and became a dwarf. (87)

Women began to choose her own course and follow their own ideals. This finds expression through the female characters namely the bahu in “Bahu” , Namita in “When Anklets Tinkle”, Mala Mousi in “Incantations”, the daughter figure in “Her Mother” and Miss Das in “Sharmaji” and “Sharmaji and the Diwali Sweets.

In “Bahu” Appacahana evolves the threads of her plot from the restlessness and tension of a married couple. She builds it up step by step until the climax trends towards the protagonist’s self-assertion. Bahu plays both the roles as a wife and a working woman. She works outside as well as inside the home. Even though the bahu tries to adjust with her husband and her in-laws in all respects, her life is filled with the frustrations, conflicts and contradictions. Appachana projects romantic yearning, unrequited love, loneliness and self-exploration of the protagonist.

As Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* states that Anjana goes “beyond the scenarios of compromise, madness and death” (142) in the story “Bahu” and projects its protagonist to break free from the dependent syndrome and discover the new world. She has a strength of her own and in spite of challenges and hostilities remains uncrushed. Bahu, after her marriage with Siddharth wishes to be alone with him, wanting "time to enjoy laughter and silences, time to discover one another" (19). But prolonged matrimonial ceremonies, a prejudiced and old fashioned mother in-law, and an inefficient and unbalanced husband hamper the enjoyment of her privileged rights.

Lack of fulfillment, irresponsible attitude and absence of meaningful communication between them frustrate her. The realisation that a fragile and futile marital knot does not provide satisfaction disturbs her quite often. Their relations are emotionally dry and silence prevails between them. There is no smile, laughter and free exchange of thoughts and ideas. The relationship between Bahu and her husband is at stake and disturbed as it is loveless and joyless. There is no proper understanding between the husband and the wife.

Bahu compares her premarital life with that of the post-marital period and finds the latter one miserable. So she determines to walk out of her marriage to enjoy "Blissful solitude, wonderful, wonderful independence"(23). Bahu's disappointment in her marital life and her boredom with routine domestic works give her courage to walk out of marriage. It is revealed through the conversation between the couple.

Siddharth found me in the veranda and I told him that I was leaving him. He was silent for a long time. At last he asked, where will you go? I said, I'll find a place. He sat by my side on the steps. Listen, he said haltingly, I know you're tired. We'll get a servant soon. He waited for me to say something. He said, you can't go like this. . . .

I got up. I have to pack, I said.

He caught me by the arm. Please, he said, we need to talk. . . .

. . . Try and understand, he said. Abdicating your responsibilities isn't the answer.

I continued to pack. . . . I called a taxi. . . I sat inside. . . . He said, I'll wait for you. I shook my head. It began to rain as the taxi moved forward, and I breathed in deeply – at last, the smell of wet earth. (31-33)

Bahu moves out of the house with the hope of retrieving self-respect as a woman. She opines that the individual freedom is so precious that it should not be compromised or allowed to be suppressed. To live with self-respect is her primary prerogative, so she raises her unknown future with courage and confidence. Bahu goes out to deconstruct the socially imposed gender roles imposed by a patriarchal society.

As a modern woman, Bahu struggles to fight the injustice meted out by the patriarchal society. She refuses to stay with her husband and in-laws and decides to spend the rest of her life meaningfully. She does not bow in the face of the hegemonies of the family. She possesses inner strength of character. She does not impress the readers with beauty but with this strength of character.

In the story "Sharmaji", the author elevates the position of women. It reveals how education and economic independence develop confidence in women. Miss.Das, a major character in the story, works as a personnel officer in a government office with an administrative capacity. She is commanding in her tone and authoritative in the execution of her office work towards her subordinates.

As a fashionable married woman, Miss.Das differs in the concept of binding herself to marital status. She does not intend to renew her physical appearance with emphatic and the most essential changes meant for a married Hindu woman like adorning her fore head with the red paste "sindoor" or wearing the sacred, yellow thread "mangal-sutra" around her neck. Even after her marriage she retains "Miss" before her name. She finds it unnecessary to intimate her colleagues of her wedding or to introduce her husband to them. Sharmaji, the male protagonist of the story is much surprised of her indifference. Unable to restrain his inquisitiveness he inquires her as follows:

'... you must not postpone your marriage, no woman should be alone in this world ...'

'I am married.'

... 'But madam, you are *Miss Das*.'

'Yes. I've retained my maiden name.'

'Why?'

'Why not?'

Sharma considered. 'A woman goes into another family. She must take the name of the family.'

'I have not gone into any family. My husband and I are both working.'

Sharma stared at her. 'You are very modern.'

'And that is bad?'

... 'Oh well.' He surveyed her. 'You don't even look married. No sindoor, no mangalsutra, no jewellery. What is this, madam?'

'No need for all that, Sharmaji.' (57)

Miss. Das cannot be persuaded to fall in line with ordinary women of India. As stated by Indar Singh in his article entitled "Imagination and the Other" Mis.Das is "a sensitive, intelligent woman who refuses to accept any more myths created by patriarchy"(8). She knows what and how she has to be. The educated woman belonging to the modern generation tries to break away from the shackles of family tradition. The author presents the career-oriented woman becoming professional and thinking about her future. She shuns the moth-eaten morality that has always restricted her. Her dreams revolving around marriage are replaced by a craving desire to leave her footprints by doing something worthwhile. Women are no longer confined to the four walls of the house. Miss Das, the personnel officer in "Sharmaji" is discreet and smart. She does not take decisions merely by emotion but tries to judge the situation, thinks about the welfare of the company as well as of the employees and thereafter decides what should be done.

Women character in the stories "When Anklets Twinkle" and "The Prophecy" are very bold and courageous. They are self-possessed. They do not

permit either the parents or societal organisations to interfere in their ways of life. They break free from the traditional constraints to enjoy sexual liberty. The central character, Namita in "When Anklets Tinkle", an engineer by profession, has a distinct identity as a self-motivated person. At the age of twenty seven, she tells her parents that she is not interested in marriage. When Surinder, a London Doctor, comes home to propose, she presents herself before him and others in an unconventional way, wearing jeans. She upsets them further, exercising her verbal freedom. That night she out rightly informs her parents, "Don't match make for me' . . . 'It's humiliating. I'm not on display'" (99).

Anjana Appachana discovers through her meticulous observations that a modern woman like Namita is more sensitive to the rights of her body and feels no guilt in saying or acting so. When Namita realises that her mother has come to know of her nocturnal meetings and sexual affairs with the tenant of the house, Mr. Rao, she does not feel ashamed or guilty. Instead she stays cool and least perturbed. Anjana never limits her communicative range instead she allows Namita to express her feelings. Namita loses her temper to mother's contrite and apprehensive queries regarding her morality. She rudely answers that "She knew what she was doing. She had wanted to do it"(103).

Namita believes that marriage is not a compulsion for girls. She also feels that a girl should not marry a boy just because the boy loves her, "Yes, Rao wanted to marry her, he wanted to marry her, he wanted to marry her. What about her? Did none of them care how *she* felt? What about *her* wanting to marry *him*? What about *that*?" (104). When Mr. Rao proposes to her, she turns down his

proposal and says in a decisive tone, much to the surprise of everybody, that she needs more time to know him and confirms her role as the decision-maker.

Namita's sense of modernity and her rebellious attitude oppose anything that is associated with maleness and resist and reject what is considered to be feminine. Mr. Rao, whom she decides to marry is younger by one year and draws less income than her. At the time of her betrothal, she speaks rules and clarifies very clearly in an authoritative tone that after marriage she shall never resign her job and it is Rao who ought to find a job in Madras where she is working. Namita resembles Elizabeth in Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*. Nate, Elizabeth's husband is afraid of her as "The Lady with the axe" (21). Elizabeth's rule-bound life makes him to muse thus, "It's the rule that when Elizabeth cooks, Nate does the dishes. One of the many rules, sub rules. . . . Living with Elizabeth involves a maze of much legalities, no easier some of them are unspoken" (21). Namita sheds time-held traditions and customs, and approaches marriage with her own decision. Unable and unwilling to accept the matchmaking plans traditionally honoured by her family, Namita takes charge of her own destiny.

Amrita in "The Prophecy" is a teenage girl, staying in a hostel. She develops a loveless relationship with her boy friend, Rakesh and has physical relationship with him just for the sake of adventure, "She did not want to get married to him after college. She didn't want to end up like her parents. She wanted adventure"(69). As she becomes pregnant, with no guilty feeling she decides to abort. It is only the thoughts of the consequence of abortion, instills a fear in her heart and not the sexual act. Amrita is a typical new woman who looks

out for sensuous pleasure but is unwilling to take risk that shall affect her personal joy. After being expelled from college she compromises with the situation and readily marries a man of her father's choice and shamelessly writes a letter to her friend, Hemalatha about her happy wedded life.

In the modern times, man-woman relationship has become vastly different from what it was in the past. In earlier times, the Indian woman was bound by tradition, taught and trained from childhood to walk in the shadow of her husband. With the socio-political scene undergoing a sea change since post independence, and the advancement of education, many women started taking up jobs over and above their domestic work. The new found economic independence of women saw them undergoing extreme changes in behaviour, a very liberal attitude towards sex and sexuality. As in the case of the women characters such as Namita and Amrita, they are courageous enough to face the world with their own identity.

In "Incantations", Mala Mousi, the aunt of Sangeeta is the exact opposite of her sister, Sangeeta's mother who completely surrenders herself to female acceptance. Mala is a gynaecologist who is not married, lives alone and is contented with her freedom. Her love for life is, in the words of Geeti, "serious, contemplative, silent" (122). She does not believe in God, Hell or Heaven. Her work is her only worship.

Geeti is the narrator of the story. She disapproves many of her mother's attitudes and her ways of life, yet she is unlike her aunt who does not want to get married. Her question, "Was there no in-between?" (132) reveals her state of

mind. She admires her aunt's objectivity and independence. She hates the injustice done to woman and does not want to leave everything at the hands of fate. The story of Lord Rama abandoning the pregnant Sita moves and stirs her deeply. She is disgusted with the five husbands of Draupadi who keep on sitting and watching helplessly when Duryodhana orders Dussadhana to strip her naked. Geeti does not reject marriage but certainly disapproves of woman tolerating everything with her mouth shut. She believes in the harmonious relationship between man and woman.

Mala Mousi thinks that it is stupid on the part of Sangeeta to narrate to her teenage sister Geeti about the sexual exploitation by her brother-in-law. Instead she should have told everything to her parents, which would have put an end to her suffering. Geeti is not mature enough to comprehend Sangeeta's victimisation. Geeti wonders how her aunt Mala is able to cope with the situation she faces all by herself in spite of being alone. She appreciates her aunt and remarks: "How did Mala Mousi cope? Where did she get her optimism from, how could she be so careful about her future, all alone, always alone?" (114). Women empowerment helps her to realise her sense of self-worth, her right to have the power of control over her own life, both within and outside home and her ability to influence the direction of social change in the patriarchal contexts. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Namita and Mala Mousi assert their individuality through education and economic independence.

The story, “Her Mother” that fetched Appachana the O.Henry Festival prize talks about the agony of a mother whose daughter remains insensitive to her maternal love and care. Anjana captures the modern mind of a young woman who wishes to settle in a country that gives her complete freedom. She does not wish to get confined to Indian environment that restricts her movement in the name of tradition and culture. The mother is startled to find her daughter adopting the American culture, secretly having an affair with her sister’s husband, and ostentatiously making her parents comprehend her unwillingness to return to India. The mother drafts a letter, outpouring all her motherly feelings and earnestly pleading her to come back. She fears that the daughter may forget her home and culture and get married to an American. The daughter never yields to her mother’s request. The only consolation for the mother is to sustain vain hope and imagine that her daughter would return and be as her mother expects her to.

The daughter is well educated in Delhi University and has won a scholarship for a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature in a US university. She goes there in a bout of defiance in the same way as she has cut off her long hair – to spite those who hurt her. The story is slow to indicate the villain of the story, the brother-in-law who lives with his in-laws while his wife is working in Bombay. The daughter is undoubtedly taken in by all his charm and the likelihood is that they had an affair — although it is nowhere specifically indicated in the story. But the daughter’s defiance, anger and pain are the result of the deep emotional hurt caused by the brother-in-law. She knows that if she would expose her relationship with the brother-in-law she would be blamed and she decides to internalise the

pain and escape to the States. She is bold enough to break with the situation and create a new life for herself.

Education has made her conscious of the futility of the various long preserved notions and taboos about the woman. She starts opposing and breaking them against her own timid self as well as man's protectoral shell. Education illuminates her predicament and she resolves to seek freedom and independence. The daughter emerges as a capable modern woman who challenges the male chauvinistic society.

Through these characters, Anjana traces the modern attitude of women who wish to move out of darkness and passivity and enter into a more glamorous active world of their choice. They do not like to remain any longer a puppet on a string, manipulated to fit into a framework of others' expectations. They enjoy breaking all the rules meted out by the patriarchal society to receive adventure, freedom and dignity. They make mistakes but they learn from them and move forward. They never regress or withdraw into a shell. There is an urge in them to live life meaningfully.

India, today, is at the cusp of a paradigm change in its growth and its position in the world. Both men and women must act decisively to capture this opportunity. There is a need to think big and scale up rapidly in each and every area, be it education, infrastructure, industry, financial services or equality of both genders. For around two centuries, social reformers and missionaries in India have endeavoured to bring women out of confines in which centuries of traditions have kept them.

History is a witness to the women who have in the past demonstrated unique leadership capabilities. Razia Sultana, Rani of Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi are the role models of emancipated women. Earlier, most women were able to demonstrate the leadership qualities only on their home fronts, as in Indian society man has always acted as the master of the scene and the decision regarding the issue of empowering women has always been taken by him. God has gifted women with compassion, tender-heartedness, caring nature and concern for others. These are very positive signs which imply that women can be leaders. In order to help women to be in limelight, they need to be empowered. Therefore, empowerment of women is the prerequisite to transform a developing country into a developed country.

Traditionally, gender based divisions persisted in intra-household decision-making. Women basically decide on food preparation and men make the financial decision. Women are one of the greatest assets in our society. They equal to men in all aspects. Women are more perfect in the power to create, nurture and transform. Anjana envisions and proposes a milieu wherein women realise the significance of using the freedom to choose and make their lives happy, joyful and most importantly meaningful. Thus she suggests an alternative picture of reality that she has projected in her stories.

Women are still very far from attaining the required level of socio-cultural, educational, and economic advantages usually enjoyed by men. Women in Indian society are still under the pressure to conform to traditional concepts of womanly behaviour, to be self-effacing, supportive and unjudging and to invest

all their efforts in their man's success rather than their own. In the recent years, sustained struggle is being made by women to retain their rights as human beings. The struggle they make for their voices to be made heard is apparently an unending process.

As observed by Elaine Showalter in her article entitled *Towards a Feminist Poetics*, "It is important to see the female literary tradition in . . . relation to the wider evolution of women's self-awareness and to the ways in which any minority group finds its directions of self expressions in relation to the dominant society"(212). Women have generally been regarded as sociological chameleons; taking on the class, life style and cultural aspects of their male counterparts. It can be argued that women themselves constituted to subordination within the framework of a larger society. The 'new women' replaced the suffering and submissive models of women. Seshadri in her book entitled *The New Woman in Indian English Women Writes Since the 1970s* writes that "The new woman is assertive and self-willed, searching to discover her true self . . ." (12).

It is necessary to understand the term 'New Woman'. According to Usha Bande and Atma Ram who mention in their book entitled *Woman in Indian Short Stories: Feminist Perspective*

. . . the 'New Woman' is one who . . . is aware of herself as an individual, she is free from her traditional, social and moral constrictions and is able to live with a heightened sense of dignity, and individuality. The 'New Woman', then, is the product of a new economic order in which woman casts aside her 'invisibility', comes out of the metaphorical purdah and

avails of the opportunities provided by education, enfranchisement and employment. She, with her male counterpart, struggles for achievements in the professional and economic spheres, and deconstructs the image of a submissive, repressed and self-effacing being. The picture that emerges is of a self-reliant, emancipated and happy individual, a person, sexually uninhibited intelligent, confident and assertive. (14)

As Rosalind Miles writes that the women “have continuously turned and turned to . . . the vital task of making sense of their experience as women, and harmonising the often unbearably painful conflicts of their lives and all this they have achieved in the face of long-standing, deep-rooted hostility and denial”(19) .

Gender is a common term where as gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity, and suppression in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination. Like male or even above them female plays an important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognised by the male dominant society. Woman continues to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife. Women empowerment and development help them to recognise their rights and abilities.

Appachana as a social critic has sought to redress the imbalance in society by providing women with same rights and opportunities as men, in order to be able to take their rightful place in the world. She also begins to realise that equal rights alone cannot free women from sexual and social subordination. Intellectual

starvation, economic expression, commercial exploitation, domestic domination, physical abuse, sexual harassment and lack of personal freedom still continue to affect the lives of women in spite of laws to the contrary. Hence, she analyses and accesses the socio-cultural setup looking for clues to explain the mechanism of patriarchy that contrives to keep women eternally subjugated.

Women should realise their own capabilities and potentials which will strengthen their self-image and foster them with confidence to take action in life. Indian society is inherited with male chauvinism but now the society has started to realise women's importance and the need for women's empowerment as they are as active agents for the development of the society.

Education develops the skills, imparts knowledge, changes the attitude and improves the self confidence. It provides employment opportunity and increases income. Hence educating women is the prime factor to combat gender discrimination and for the upliftment of women. Not only the female, the society must be educated to give equal rights for female.

Employment gives the income and improves the economic position of the women. Employed women are given importance by the family members. In India, mostly, woman at a young age depends on her father, in the middle age she depends on her husband and in the older age depends on her son. Woman always depends on somebody for her livelihood, hence, independent in economical aspects is imperative for women's development. Economic independence will free women from the slavery position and boost their self-confidence and in turn helps in the national economic development.

Due to prolonged suppression, Indian women, especially the uneducated and unemployed have no self-confidence. Women need self-confidence to fight against all the atrocities and lead a self-esteemed life. Boosting the morale and self-confidence of the women eliminate their inferior complex. A nation or society, without the participation of women cannot achieve development. If gender discrimination is eliminated, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, the nation and the whole world.

Appachana plays the role of a social critic, as no writer can isolate herself or himself from society, the violence, the system, the injustice around her. By giving voice to the discontentment among middle-class women, and creating characters who move from victimisation to self-assertion, Appachana provides a pattern for the consciousness of the contemporary Indian women.

The short stories of Appachana — “Bahu”, “When Anklets Tinkle”, “Incantations”, “Her Mother”, “Sharmaji” and “Sharmaji and the Diwali Sweets” - cannot destroy repressive social structures; but by raising questions, suggesting re-assessment and re-thinking, they can help in formulating a consciousness of being self-assertive which can ultimately bring about a constructive and healthy change in society particularly in the position of women.

The characters in the short stories of Appachana have often become mouthpieces to voice Appachana’s own self, thoughts, attitudes, ideologies and at other times her experiences, incidents, events and problems that have been seen in her social milieu. The moral dilemmas of women trapped in social and emotional circumstances, struggling against oppression and a hostile fate are very well

interpreted. Appachana helps in the significant task of deconstructing, redefining or demolishing the gender archetypes that the society has created through centuries.

In the post independence era, women writers in Indian English have become more conscious of the concept of a liberated woman. There are images of the new emerging women in their works. Being one of the writers of this era Appachana pleads for the rightful place for a woman in a man-woman relationship. Her goal is to liberate women from the injustices and oppression they suffer in society.

The traditional hierarchial set up of Indian society plays a major part in hindering the development of a personal, individualised concept of autonomy in the Indian woman. The conventional insistence on service, self effacement, and sublimation of the ego that the religious convictions of the majority community insist upon, the importance given to spiritual rather than material values in life are the factors that influence the Indian woman culturally, in inhibiting the growth of the self or ego in her. Women who are bothered only about their survival at all costs do not understand about being equal with their men, they have other priorities in life. Only the educated middle class women like Bahu, Namita, Miss Das, Mala Mousi and the daughter character in "Her mother" are more concerned about development and asserting their identities and aspiring for an equal partnership with men.

Majority of women are contented with a subordinate place in home and in society, though a few writers have protested against that state of inequality.

Towards the end of the century numerous women started expressing in various ways their dissatisfaction with an inferior status agitating for inequality with men.

Shaw supported women's rights and in *Freedom for Women* wrote:

Unless woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself. It is false to say that woman is now directly the slave of man: she is the immediate slave of duty; and as man's path to freedom is strewn with the wreckage of the duties and ideals he has trampled on, so must hers be. (qtd. in Bell 45)

Most of his heroines have the characteristics of a 'New Woman'; they are independent in spirit, self confident, clear-headed, morally courageous and emotionally well controlled.

Nayantara Sahgal, the noted Indian novelist in her essay "Women: Persons or Possessions" castigates those who regard women as 'property' and discourage individuality in them: "When I heard someone remark "we never allow our daughter to go out" or "I can't do that, my husband would not like it", it sounded very peculiar, alien jargon. As if, I thought, women were property, not persons" (Sahgal IV).

Appachna's women characters including Bahu, Namita, Mala Mousi, the daughter and Amrita epitomise the qualities of a 'new woman'. In a Patriarchal society, women find themselves in shackles of oppression and suppression. Women can only dream of liberation if their male counterparts consider them equivalent to themselves and understand their importance in uplifting the society.

Women writers like Anjana Appachana are therefore illuminated and this awakening helps them project in their writings the image of a 'New Woman'. M. Rajeshwar writes that "In such times when radical change is going on all over the county, it has become quite desirable for woman to redefine her new role and determine the parameters so as to become an integral part of family and society. . . ." Appachana feels that women should be balanced between their self-assertive roles and the conventional roles of subjugation and self-denial.

Modern women have risen far above the domestic drudgery. They are educated and are ready to tackle any situation competently. In the present times, they are no longer the inanimate objects. They have struggled hard to establish the identity of their own. They possess enough strength and self-confidence in a brave new world.

Appachana in her short stories raise some basic problems pertaining to man-woman relationship. She makes one realise and recognise the drastic change in the spheres of roles and values. The role of man-woman has undergone a vital change. Women no longer are portrayed as weak, falling at the feet of their husbands or trying to please them. They are being represented as strong persons, independent by nature. Appachana has portrayed the new Indian women and their dilemmas, their efforts to understand themselves and to preserve their identity as a human being in the tradition-bound, male-dominated Indian society.

Appachana wants her female protagonists not to be weak personality but strong enough to make decisions, perform actions, be ready to face the consequences, whatever they may be and to be ambitious. She has her own faith

in the possibility of improvement in women's status. She advocates or works for the removal of all forms of discrimination and oppression of women so that they may live in a milieu of freedom, dignity and equality with men.

R.K.Gupta makes a mention of women's goals, ". . . first her resentment against the suppression, oppression and humiliation by men in a patriarchal society, and second, exploration of her true potential and consequent discovery of her identity. . ." (37). Appachana's women Bahu, Namita, Mala Mousi, Miss Das and the daughter figure in "Her Mother" are sketched from the reality of women's life situations and their sordid predicament. These women protest against social restrictions and exploitation by men so as to change their destiny. The writer motivates women to break out of traditional forms to depict how women are abused, exploited and oppressed.

The women are portrayed as growing, evolving and dynamic beings. Their efforts culminating in utter distraught, anguish or in hopeful resolutions are profound expression of their quest for selfhood and self-fulfilment. They choose and dare to fight their own battles. Their representations connote a movement for securing equality between male and female in all walks of life. It aims at ensuring freedom for womanhood in all respects.

Each story depicts the woman protagonist's journey towards survival, inner freedom and self-realisation in the violent world. The stories explore the relationship and personality of both men and women in its totality. Appachana's attempt is always to delve deep into different characters and know how life functions at different levels. She voices forth a meaningful liberation for woman

from the crux of the problem. G.D. Barthe observes in *Feminism and Literature*, “man to rule and woman to obey; man, the master, and woman, the slave; man, the god, and the woman, the devout; man for the field and woman for the health . . .”(127). This centuries-old mutely followed relationship is challenged by Appachana.

Vijay Ghorpade in *Indian Women Novelists in English* comments that woman “deserves to be treated on an equal footing with man. Woman can no longer be considered a mere child-breeding machine, never to be allowed to stir out the four walls of home” (167). They need recognition on par with man in the great task of social reconstruction where upon a healthy relationship would dawn.

The real object of marriage is not home and housekeeping, domicile and poultry, but it is companionship and intellectual association between man and wife and Appachana does not approve of a marriage where such as association is wanting. No doubt that every generation should preserve culture and try to shape future and coming generations. But it does not mean that while preserving the same, the dreams and desires of women should be crushed under the heels of male dominance.

Prasad in his book *Indian Women Novelists in English* asserts that “true marriage is a relation based on mutual trust and recognition between two separate single human beings”(180). According to Dass, “the man-woman relationship can’t be restored to the axis of equality and liberty through constitution and legislation alone, but through mutual understanding, love and respect” (134).

Appachana expects the society to come out of the image of a traditional woman who merely keeps on following her assigned roles. The author succeeds in conveying effectively her idea of the modern woman through these characters portrayed in this anthology *Incantations and Other Stories*. The 'new woman' need not be the one who is aping the western models and ignoring her family. She does not hate her male counterpart, nor is overt and indecent. She is aware of her state in the society and thinks of her own life and future in addition to thinking about her family and in-laws. Self-awareness is her chief characteristic. She must be given the freedom to choose what she wants; she expects man to respect her feelings and emotions. She does not want matriarchy, but dreams of a harmonious relationship between man and woman where she is given equal rights and opportunities. This would lead to the progress of humanity.