



ASSORTED NUANCES OF WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORIES OF ABBURI CHAYA DEVI

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It is common knowledge that people read translations when they do not possess the language skills necessary to read the originals. Translations are specifically aimed at the readers who cannot read the originals in other languages like Telugu. Nearly two/three generations back, the interest in English has increased. Translations demand certain mental disposition or aptitude on the part of the readers. The writers are able to inherent idea that the essence of beauty of Telugu is carried into English version. Sahitya Academy's policy states that, their main aim is, "to foster and co-ordinate literary activities in all the Indian languages and to promote through them all the cultural unity of the country." In the present scenario market, there are many anthologies of short stories are available. Such as the collection of short stories by Dr. Kesava Reddy's *"He Conquered the Jungle"* (*Athadu Adavini Jayinchadu*) translated by C.L.L. Jayaprada, *"Bonsai Life and other stories"* (*Bonsai Brathukulu*) translated by Alladi Uma and M.Sridhar.

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The present paper encircles about the feministic issues especially related to the Abburi Chaya Devi's collection of short stories "Bonsai Life and other stories" or "Bonsai Brathukulu" which reflects the traditional and middle class woman who are sensitive to the changing times and situations. These interesting short stories reflects how a woman tries to squirm to acquire self-hood by dissolving their cynicism and by inculcating the strength to survive with dignity and analyzing their problems rationally and at last finding that there is no easy answer to life's existential problem and the choice before them is limited.

In her short stories, Abburi Chaya Devi reveals a remarkable insight into the nature of a women's mind and depicts women in different roles like wife, mother, daughter, and above all an individual in her own right. She is concerned always with a woman's search for her identity. She endeavors to establish woman as an individual, who break loose from the traditional constraints and refines her identity in tune with the changed social ambience of the modern times.

In my paper I took three stories of Abburi Chaya Devi i.e., 'The Wood Rose' which is a second story, 'That's Culture' ("Adoka Sanskriti") which is an eleventh story and 'Crossing the Limits' ("Paridhi



Datina Vela”) which is the fifteenth and the last story which is extracted from the ‘Bonsai Life and other stories” and was translated into English by Dr.E.Nageshwara Rao.

These three stories are the interesting short stories which reflects how a woman tries to squirm to acquire self-hood by dissolving their cynicism of gender disparities and by inculcating the strength to survive with dignity and analyzing their problems rationally and at last finding that there is no easy answer to life’s existential problem and the choice before them is limited. The three stories reflect the difference between two generations, their way of thinking, attitude, approach and state of mind.

When we see the story of “The Wood Rose”, it is an interesting short story which reflects the intricacies of old people living in cities and how their feelings are ruptured by their offspring. It will make us realize that old people are also sensitive and have feelings. It also shows the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law and their way of thinking. For instance, when her daughter-in-law Kamala was planting a sapling. The protagonist asks....

“What is it Kamala?”..... “Are they Sankham flowers?”.....“Can they be used for Puja?” “No, this is called wood rose”.“Better to plant Sannajaji, so that we will have a lot of sweet-smelling flowers. Young girls can deck their plaits.....” (Bonsai Life and Other Stories: 8)

On asking if it was “Sankam plant” the daughter-in-law replied that it was wood rose creeper. She is unable to guess and came to know the Telugu version of wood rose creeper. She became curious and asked its colour, shape, fragrance and whether it can be used for puja. Kamala told that it was long, bell shaped yellow flower and from the middle of it rose like flower blooms. The flowers look beautiful with no fragrance and the flowers won’t fade if we can keep them in a vase. She thought and advised Kamala of planting Sannajaji as the flowers give sweet smell and also can be used for puja and as well as young girls can deck their plaits with them and moreover it

is a good gift for women. But Kamala didn’t care her words and arranges the flowers in a vase.

The protagonist accustomed to see the wood rose flowers which were like roses with the colour of sandalwood and were strangely attractive. But, when she held them in her hand and look closely they were dry and brittle. When she enquired with Kamala regarding those flowers, she explains that the fresh red and yellow roses symbolize youth and the dry wood rose stands old age. Such arrangement of old and new is called ikebana. Even though, Kamala satires but she took it in a positive way. She smiles and says – “*why not call it as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law?*” (9). She also develops affinity with the wood roses because she looks herself in that plant.

Another instance we can took it from the story “That’s Culture” where the protagonist tries to acquire same status like men and also tries to fight with the traditional constraints, customs and traditions. When it comes to the next generation she sees her replica in her daughter Srijana but in a different way. The protagonist feels that a girl should grow like a natural tree but not like a bonsai plant. She feels that the negative experiences which she faced at her young age by her mother should not be faced by her daughter. Moreover when Srijana was born her family was disappointed and shows lack of enthusiasm regarding Srijana as they were expecting a male child. So, the protagonist does not want to disappoint her child and she always shower more affection on Srijana and support her views. But, Srijana took her mother’s affection as an advantage and becomes as superciliousness’ lady. She always demands what she wants as a right. She always want the things to be done as per her wishes. If the protagonist objected, she used to shout and makes fuss. The protagonist wants Srijana to admit her in M.B.A but Srijana rejected and took Home Science. “*The pocket money she took was also a lot. We wanted to admit her in MBA; she insisted on studying Home Science.*” (112)

Another instance is when the protagonist commented on the approach and demands of Srikanth’s family saying that they are too orthodox and greedy. She was shocked when she sees the outlook and approach of Srijana getting irritated on



her mother and supporting her fiancé i.e., Srikanth's family as she was already on their side saying that, "What's this! They're living in America. How can they be orthodox! How can they be greedy when they don't lack anything?" (116).

At the same time when the protagonist infuriates with Srijana's words and says that they are making them to spend many lakhs of rupees for unnecessary expenses in the name of tradition and fun. Instead of understanding her mother intention and parents pain for getting money she questions her mother, "What are you calculating? For whom are you both earning? Is it an ordinary thing to have an alliance from America?" (117).

When we see the other story "Crossing the Limits", it represents about an expedition in women's internal life. It shows how the women everlasting or never-ending struggle for self-identity and also epitomizes how women with all intricacies in life need to move on. In the story, the protagonist went out with determination to bring medicines for her as the family members often annoys on her so she feels that not to depend on men and others and opines that if everyone does one's job into men's work and women's work from the beginning and tied us to the house. Even though the next generation annoy on her she took their words in a positive way and feels that, today's women will not have any difficulty to go out but have their own tendencies and problems like as her daughter and daughter-in-law who work hard both at home and outside.

"They have to work hard both at home and outside and travel by buses. 'What a pity!'" (156)

In the story the protagonist attempts to live all alone terms, opposing its fancies with stony silences, adjusted self-affirmation and profound association in their crafts. For instance, when the protagonist went out for medicines and even though the same truth conveyed to her family members nobody believes her. In the evening when her daughter-in-law returned home, she found fault and spoke with her in an accused manner. She is only concerned about the views of their friends, relatives will blame them but she didn't understand the protagonist even though they are of same gender. She argues with her mother-in-law (protagonist) and says –

"Doesn't it mean that we are not buying and giving you the medicines you need? You want to let everyone know that we are not looking after you properly? What would happen to our prestige in our neighbourhood, in our office, among our relatives and friends?" (159)

Even her daughter also suspects the protagonist that she quarreled with her husband or she could not able to adjust with her son's family and she asks inquisitively –

"Mother, tell me the truth. Why did you go away from home without informing anyone?" (158).

Even though, they didn't show love and affection, her grand children praised the protagonist. "How brave of you, grandmother!" (159)

Chaya Devi stories are varied from woman to woman. Her greatest contribution to womanhood is to give them courage to have emotional independence, the toughest of them all. She advises to live a life of dignity and this dignity should inspire her next generation.

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