

AN EMPOWERED WOMAN IN RAJAM KRISHNANAN'S LAMPS IN THE WHIRLPOOL

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Abstract:

Rajam Krishnan, an excellent writer is known for writing social novels on the lives of people, such as poor farmers, salt workers and female workers and so on. In this novel, *Lamps in the Whirlpool* she gives an account of female experiences in the orthodox Brahmin community. It reveals Girija's struggles in an orthodox Brahmin family to maintain her authority in her home and the way she breaking the conventions in the orthodox set up. Her mother –in-law and husband treated her like a slave, after recognizing herself she leaves from the home and decided her life as she wants. The paper focuses on the life of a protagonist Girija. She is a best example for an empowered woman.

Key Words: devotion, harmony. Enlightenment,

Lamps in the Whirlpool written by Rajam Krishnan, is a translation of the *Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal*. The “lamps” in the title symbolizes the situation of women in the family as the “whirlpool” indicates the inconvenience that is faced by women. The protagonist Girija is a middle class girl, post graduated and has served in a village school for eight years and she got married to Swaminathan who is qualified and well placed in life. After bearing two daughters and a son and serving her mother-in-law with uncompromising devotion for seventeen years Girija comes to realize the emptiness of her life. After long tour, Swaminathan drops in only to pack up and leave on yet another professional trip. He is insensitive to his wife’s state of mind. Losing his temper and male egoistic anger he shows his crude behavior on her. His mother does not seem to think that her son was either unreasonable or boorish. So she takes the decision of

leaving the family. She spends four days in *Haridwar* and feels enlightened and returns home. The mother-in-law and her husband charge her with infidelity and order her to clear out of the house. She is horrified by their cruel assumptions. Girija goes out in search of Ratna. Understanding Girija’s predicament, Ratna and her friends in the hostel give her temporary refuge and take care of her. She seeks employment with a nun who is running a home for refugee children. Her concern is to see her daughters, when they are grown up, are not destroyed by the family regimen.

The women become representative of societal rituals, customs and traditions. According to the *madi* rules, a wife should take an early bath before entering the kitchen. She must wash her night clothes daily. Particularly, widows must wear “*narmadi*”(4). Girija follows this *madi* rules, without any objection as per her mother-in-law’s order. Girija does not like those rules, even though she follows it at the instance her mother-in-law. Instead of that she remains free from all her responsibilities. Her foremost job is to supervise her daughter-in-law. Swaminathan pays his attention only on his business. He does not show any kind of support or love or affection for her. She feels that everything is sacrificed only for the sake of her husband and children welfare. Though an educated woman, she is equally foolish woman who sacrifice her life for the domestic harmony. Girija’s husband, on the other hand, considers her as a worm destined to serve him and his mother. But in all fairness he had no bad habits, he did not drink or smoke, nor was he interested in other woman. There had been no secrets between them. He was authoritative by nature. She had always given to him. Girija’s husband always went for business trips, when he returned from the trips with a pile of dirty clothes and it was her responsibility to get them washed and pressed. She took care of him each and every details, but Swaminathan did not like her that much. Every woman wanted to be taken care of by her husband during the time of illness. Girija also felt like that but her husband did not bother about it. He feels that she was a machine to do all the household works without fail. She did not have the right to ask a simple question to him, she had not even raised her voice against him.

Girija has torn herself away from her family with the implicit faith that she would find peace on the banks of the Ganges. She advises Girija to take life in her hands and act with clarity. She returns home with a sense of enlightenment, after four days. Girija's husband and mother-in-law lay the blame on her with disloyalty and command her to leave the house. When she returns home, her entry is barred, for she has the mother-in-law, she a woman of course, is unsympathetic, and that is the greater tragedy of the Indian scene. She is horrified by their cruel assumptions. What pains her more deeply is that Swaminathan tells his son Bharat that Girija is a loose woman and has run away. The old lady encourages her son: "The milk is spilt and nothing can be done about it. Let she take her belongings and leave" (61). Girija had received a good education and had even worked for a while. But marriage had caged her.

Lamps in the Whirlpool unquestionably represents the life of women in the contemporary age of Rajam Krishnan. Girija and Swaminathan were come from same culture, tradition, religion and caste. In their life there is no love and affection. Mutual understanding is missing between them. So the life can be complete only the mutual understanding of the husband and wife. Without a man or woman the life cannot be concluded in a successful way, because man and woman are two parts of the same soul. Along with the love and mutual understanding the family members should follow their custom and tradition. Without culture and tradition a man's life cannot fulfill in the society.

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