

**WHAT HINDERED THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT? : INSPECTING  
THE INDIAN WOMANHOOD IN *THE WEED* AND *NAGAMANDALA***

**Noufal Muneer Gazali**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, WMO College, Muttil, University Of Calicut

**Abstract:** *Rural development can be comprehended in myriad ways of signifying. It can be signified as the development of means of production, mental, social and material development of people who live in the villages. Gandhi was the great visionary who found abundance of possibilities for the financial wellbeing of a nation through rural development and self sufficiency of the village people. India, being and following the agrarian principles of development has often, in its way of development, been choked in its throat with many of unwanted obstacles such as taboos and superstitions. The present paper discusses some of such obstacles otherwise that might have contributed in to the bigger rural development by wealth and strength. Two women characters, namely Rani and Angoori , were to be a substantial instruments in the development of their rural set up. But unfortunately, both of them became victims of their rural stubbornness. Their talents and skills were totally denigrated and pushed into a quiet oblivion. The then society couldn't practically use the immense possibilities in women in the development of society. Thus the portrayal of Angoori by Amrita Pritam in her short story *The Weed* and Rani by Girish Karnad in his modern play *Nagamandala* is an exact paradigm for the age old patriarchal denial of including women in the rural development. The paper also discursively sheds light on how literature conceived the ideas of rural in its different varieties.*

**Keywords:** Hindrance, Rural, Development, Literature

Literature has tremendously paved many ways for discussion on economic issues of the world. A literary genre having exclusively its origin in a particular social milieu would also comprehensively come up in its

progress with interactions of concurrent issues and problems of that particular society. Debates on development especially when it is related with the rural nature have its own importance not only in economic or commerce disciplines but have their roots in literature also. Women, being one of the most vulnerable sections of the society had for the time immemorial no roles in the making of development. The problem was severe in the rural backyards. Women can contribute immensely in the rural development. But the male oriented social set up of India has never lent its ear or eye to alter the conventionally adored so called values.

Amrita Pritam's short story *The Weed* sheds light on having such a discussion in relation with its main character Angoori. She was a victim of the social anarchy- child marriage. A child, for a nation gives hopes for its future if nurtured and bred well. The age old conventionally transmitted customs of Indian rural societies become a big threat in using its human resource and man power in the developmental activities and schemes of welfare of the society. Angoori would have been an asset for her family and village if her patriarch father had sense and sensibility for educating her. But he was choked in the superstitions and blindly became an adherent to the laws of the dead. Angoori was married to an old, loose jawed Prabhati in her tender age in which she was totally unable to manage a family or to make a home. The then society had never allowed women reach in to a self-sufficiency. Moreover they had never expected a woman becoming the bread winner of a house. Women were sent to their husbands' houses without even beginning their puberty; a big loss for a village and thereby the rural development. Giving education for a girl child is likely to give education to the whole society for the first developmental level of a child is the cradle of his mother. But in the case of Angoori, this was an unattainable dream for she was totally denied having education. The view and her perception on education were of a huge sympathy.

What are you reading ,*bibi*? Angoori asked me one day when I sat under a *neem* tree reading.

‘Want to read it?’

‘I don’t know reading.’

‘Want to learn?’

‘Oh, no!’

‘Why not? What’s wrong with it?’

‘It’s a sin for women to read!’

‘And what about men?’

‘For them, it’s not a sin.’

‘Who told you this nonsense?’

‘I just know it.’

‘I read. I must be sinning.’

‘For city women, it’s no sin. It is for village women.’ (Babu 56).

Detachment from the modern ideas, technologies and nuanced ways of advancements hindered the people of village, especially women, even to think and develop a changed perception from the clutches of superstitions and mythical beliefs. Nothing would be satisfying them except blindly believing whatever had taught them by their elders and village chiefs. None of them were ready to make an experiment contrary to the legacy of their forefathers. The village women, especially in the northern rural areas of India kept *pardah* from men and women. This confinement into their own selves was an obstacle for them to mingle and to have manifold experiences from heterogeneous people. Consequently they developed a kind of one dimensional outlook towards everything whichever befalls upon them. This way of rustic upbringing stained with lack of confidence, entrepreneur skills, and managerial capabilities made them creatures of good for nothing. These women also were captivated in the suffocating and fumigating kitchens in which none of their efforts were counted as productive works. The patriarchal society injected all of its frailties up on women and treated even not to help themselves think of the necessity of reviving what were in them. The society

handicapped itself by ignoring and neglecting a tremendous resource it had in women in hand. The 'coefficient of resource utilization theory; maximum utilization of available resources was totally denigrated but optimally used in utilizing women for unproductive matters. If their household chores and works were paid, they would have been, for the least, the supporters of their own lives. The pathetic status they were once would have been cleansed forever. But the demonic, gigantic and egotistical patriarchy became a mammoth hindrance in front of them. If Angoori had been educated and properly nurtured, the development to her close circles would have been unimaginable. She could have been an instrument to impart and induce new developmental idea and perceptions to her offspring on the least. Lack of getting proper education for Angoori in the adequate time had become a major threat in reviving herself. When Angoori thought of developing her own self she realized the pathetic situation she was already in.

I found her sitting under the *neem* tree one day in a profoundly abstracted mood. Usually one could hear Angoori coming to the well; her ankle-bells would announce her approach. They were silent that day.

'What's the matter, Angoori?'

She gave me a blank look and then, recovering a little, said,

'Teach me reading, bibi.'

'Teach me to write my name'

'Why do you want to write? To write letters? To whom?'

She did not answer, but was once again lost in her thoughts (Babu 58).

Thus Angoori realized that nothing can alter her present miserable situation but education. Without learning to read and write, a revival was impossible. Angoori showed a tendency to wake up from the long slumber of superstition and ill omens.

The case of Rani in Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala* was not far better than Angoori's was. She was also a girl of tender age living in a rustic background. After the marriage Rani was also locked up in her

husband's house. "Rani looks at him nonplussed. He pays no attention to her, goes out, shuts the door, locks it from the outside and goes away. She runs to the door, pushes it, finds it locked, peers out of the barred window. He is gone" (74). She was a good, smart, energetic and enthusiastic girl. "A young girl, her name...it doesn't matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani. Queen. Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long tresses" (73). But all of her vitality and verve have been captivated under the taming power of tyranny and patriarch Appanna. By locking Rani inside his house Appanna became a hindrance in the process of socializing her. The abilities and capabilities of Rani as a human being were choked and nullified for the sake of wedlock. Appanna's interference with Rani had neither the benefit of developing a warm relationship nor the effect of contributing to the human resource rather he was contaminating the age old values and the social setup of the village community. A family, being the first step to socialize, mould and moralize the society has the responsibility to uplift each one of its member in to them. Appanna as the breadwinner of his family had all these responsibilities. But he was, on the contrary, moving apart of them without helping Rani find a way for up keeping her own needs. Living in the house of Appanna created in Rani nothing less than a world of utmost dejection and despair. The power of human resource has been completely denigrated once again. This rural figure, Rani, might have kept abundance of developmental abilities if checked, found and nurtured timely. Thomas Gray in his influential poem "Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard" observes this pathetic condition of rural people as:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.  
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,

Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood  
Though Gray has observed this rustic people from a masculine point of view  
the case of women was not far better than this. Each of the villagers posses  
equal or more than equal capabilities in par with others live in urban areas or  
in suburbs. Insufficiency of opportunities for learning, practicing and  
advancing their livelihood made them unchangeable creatures. If they were  
properly nurtured, timely nuanced and also given equal facilities of  
developing they would have shown the world wonders.

As Gandhi, father of the nation, observed life of India lies in villages.  
Women have a considerable space in it. They have to have partaken in every  
developmental thoughts and activities of rural life. Socially, politically,  
economically and personally they have to be improved. This improvement  
would reflect the development of rural life. Thus the hindrance so long  
cherished in our rural world may come to an end and thereby the rural  
development.

### **Bibliography**

- Babu, C.R Murukan, editor. *Indian Blossoms : An Anthology of Selections from Indian Writing in English*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Gandhi, M. K. *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. New Generation Publishing, 2017.
- Gray, Thomas. "Elegy Written in Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray." Poetry Foundation, Poetry Foundation, [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44299/elegy-written-in-a-country-churchyard](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44299/elegy-written-in-a-country-churchyard).