



# Aspect of Transformation in Woman's life : A Study in A.K.Ramanujan's "A Flowering Tree"

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## Abstract

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (16 March 1929 – 13 July 1993) was an Indian poet and scholar of Indian literature who wrote in both English and Kannada. Ramanujan was a poet, scholar, professor, philologist, folklorist, translator, and playwright. His academic research ranged across five languages: English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He published works on both classical and modern variants in Indian literature. This paper deals with transformation as an inevitable aspect in a woman's life. "Flowering Tree" is a Kannadian folklore story about a woman who undergoes transformation several times without her own will and emotion. The protagonist transformation is evidence which shows the status of woman's life in this patriarchy society.

Key Words : Transformation, Patriarchy, Folklore, Society

A.K. Ramanujan (or AKR) 16 March 1929 - 13 July 1993), who taught at the University of Chicago for 30 years, has remained an iconic figure for the Indian literary community for a long time. He was an Indian poet and scholar of Indian literature who wrote in both English and Kannada. Ramanujan was a poet, scholar, professor, philologist, folklorist, translator, and playwright. His academic research ranged across five languages: English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He published works on both classical and modern variants in Indian literature. After making his mark first as an Indian English poet in the mid-1960s, he won enduring fame in India and abroad for his pioneering translations of classical Tamil poetry, and later, of Bhakti poetry in Tamil and Kannada. During the latter half of his career, AKR worked on anthologizing and

translating folk tales from across India in as many as 20 languages. As a scholar and intellectual, he also imparted essays throwing light on several important aspects of Indian culture related to our language systems and oral/written literary traditions.

Folklore in-stilled all categories of people and in Indian English literature. Through our grandmother's way, elderly people passed it for generations . Folklore - Proverbs, tales, history, lullabies , medicine, fantasies, Kings, animals, Common men and Women are still alive in this world, particularly in India. A.K Ramanujan has a special place in writings of folklore. This research paper shows the status & plight of women in society as an ignored aspect of our patriarchal society and the things which were seen as insignificant.

“ A Flowing Tree” is a short story written by A.K.Ramanujan in his 1997 book A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India. In actuality, it is a Kannada folklore told by women which is translated by A. K. Ramanujan to English. This story is about the relationship between women and nature. It clearly posturizes the woman’s vulnerability and commodification during her transformations.

A poor woman with two daughters, sisters wishes to help their mother to improve the financial needs to survive in this world. The younger who is the protagonist, is blessed with some magical powers to transform herself to a flowering tree which blooms beautiful and fragrant flowers and again to human form, decides to perform transformation rituals and sell those flowers with the help of older sister to earn money. She asked older sister to clean the place, and bring two pitchers of water to perform the transformation rituals. Younger one instructed the older sister, first to sprinkle the water on her while she said mantras. After she transforms as a tree asks her to pluck the flowers carefully without damaging stems and leaves as the tree is vulnerable. Later again the older sister has to sprinkle the water on every part of the tree so she transforms to human form. They weave beautiful garlands with the flowers and sell them in the palace for money. They decided to keep this secret from their mother. The prince who liked the flowers very much wished to know its origin, and started following the sisters. One day he saw the secret magical transformation. He decided to marry the younger sister and told everything to his parents(King& Queen). The Minister from the Kingdom met the mother of flower girls, and summoned the proposal of marriage of the prince with younger sister. Mother, who was shocked, couldn't go against the wish of the king and accepted the proposal. After reaching home, she came to know the story of flower and transformation.

After marriage several days the prince did not speak or touch his wife, at last when she enquired he asked to perform the transformation to a flowering tree. She first refuses and then performs the transformation after giving instructions. Every night the room used to fill with fragrant flowers and in the morning they throw the withered flowers through the window. One of her sisters-in - law who saw the transformation, schemed to take her with her friends far away from the palace and insisted on performing to a flowering tree. They did not follow the instructions given, and damaged the tree branches and leaves. The tree was wounded severely

and also did not finish the ceremony in complete. So the younger sister couldn't turn into a complete human being. There were no legs and hands. All left her without care and went away.

The passersby are surprised to see a new species crawling on the roadside which is wounded badly. A cotton wagon driver rescued her from the channel and covered her body with clothes. As he couldn't take her with him abandoned in the pavilion of the town. The town belongs to her husband's elder sister who married the king of the town. The servants of the palace informed the Queen about the rare species, and she asked them to bring it to the palace. She was given treatment and placed near the doorway of the kingdom as a decoration item.

Meanwhile the Prince who thought that his wife left the palace because of his arrogance, left his palace and wandered like a beggar. He reached his elder sister's town, Palace was identified and taken care of. He didn't utter a word to anyone. His sister sent many beautiful women to his room but never he turned. At last hopeless and with anger his sister sent the half human creature to his room, seeing it he recognized that it was his wife. Flower girl told the story, and they together performed the transformation process carefully. She turned into a complete human being. And both returned to their Palace. King was happy and punished his younger daughter.

In this story 'Flowering Tree', like any other woman in this world, the different phases in the protagonist's life shows the aspect of transformation and the status of women in this world. Five times the protagonist transforms in this story for one or the other reasons and not for herself or with her own interest. First time the protagonist transforms to help her mother as a commodity to earn money by selling flowers with help of her older sister. Second time she transforms when her mother comes to know the truth by the King's Minister to pacify her and to prove she did not do anything wrong. Third time she transforms to satisfy her husband, Fourth time to prove her chastity in front of her Sister-in-law. And the Fifth time she transforms to regain her human form and identity.

Women's ability to transform is a gift; they are vulnerable by nature, with utmost care they need to be treated. Even after the transformation as a flowering tree, the flowers have to be plucked with utmost care. As the tree is vulnerable like a woman, it proves there is a connection between a tree (nature) and a woman. As nature is compressed in the hands of humans, women are compressed in the hands of patriarchy. The protagonist is suppressed and in control throughout her life. The protagonist represents the plight of nature

as well as women in this society. The place of nature represents the place of women in this society. Women represent purity, during transformation the protagonist instructs to handle carefully, even nails should not touch her. The protagonist couldn't defend herself from others by speaking out her feelings and after transformation as a tree loses the ability of speech.

The aspect of transformation in a woman's life takes place not for oneself. Every transformation is subjected to others in this society. In this story it is clear that the transformation of the protagonist took place to suit the needs of others in her life. A woman's transformation from childhood - adulthood - womanhood - motherhood, she sacrifices her life for others, as a flowering tree giving flowers. These phases of transformation are connected to her life in day to day life. She is objectified and exploited in all ways. Transformation is inevitable in a woman's life but transformation of patriarchy society to uplift the life of woman is doubtful. At last the sacrifices make her to transform to be the survival of the fittest.

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