

Edna Ferdinand

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Professor Pinkham

In the “Punishment” by Rabindranath Tagore how were the woman treated in this reading and what was the punishment of the lie.

The “*Punishment*” by Rabindranath Tagore is about a man who murdered his wife and with the help of his brother, they covered it up with a lie. But it did not go as planned, which caused chaos and tore apart the family. Some of the themes that impacted the way the story played out are sacrifice, loyalty, government, trust, gender roles, social structure (the caste system), etc. the themes are shown in how the characters were treated and how they responded. It shows what society was like during that time since this reading was published in 1982, in which the British colonies had taken over certain parts of Bangladesh. In this reading, the audience learns how women were treated and how a lie can do more damage than protecting.

Dukhiram Rui and Chidam Rui are brothers that are married to their wives and live in the same household. Living in a low-class society the brothers are not making enough money to feed their family. Dukhiram kills Radha, his wife after she had made a sarcastic comment. “After a whole day of toil and humiliation, to return—raging with hunger—to a dark, joyless, foodless house, to be met by Radha’s sarcasm, especially her final jibe, was suddenly unendurable. “What?” he roared, like a furious tiger, and then, without thinking, plunged his knife into her head. Radha collapsed into her sister-in-law’s lap, and in minutes she was dead.” (Tagore, 642). In this quote, it shows that there was a lot of stress in the household. From not having enough food, money, and humiliation. It had caused Dukhiram to break and kill Radha. After her death, the brothers decided that they would make Chandara (Chidam’s wife) since they did not want to

lose each other and felt like it would be easier for Chidam to get away from this murder than Dukhiram.

In addition, the reading shows you how the wives were treated by their husbands. Not only was Chandara being told to say that she committed a crime that she did not do, but she is being threatened and not treated right by her husband. One reason could be how old she is (she was the youngest out of the wives), Chidam being somewhat jealous of her, and the fact that Chidam did not respect or view her on the same level as he did his brother. “Chandara was not more than seventeen or eighteen...Chidam felt that a wife as nimble and sharp as Chandara could not be wholly trusted...Chidam glared at his wife and said, “If I ever hear that you’ve been to the ghāt on your own, I’ll break every bone in your body.” “The bones will mend again,” said Chandara, starting to leave. Chidam sprang at her, grabbed her by the hair, dragged her back to the room, and locked her in...” (Tagore, 644-645). It could be due to it being the norm in their society since the wife did not work and stayed at home. Dukhiram and Radha's interaction was not respectful to one another (mainly on his part). I would have mentioned how Dukhiram had murdered his wife as an example of not respecting his wife, but knowing that he came home after being teased at work and all the stress. I am not sure if it was intentional (as in he wanted her dead for a while and then did it) or out of anger and didn’t mean it.

However, there were parts in the reading that showed that Chidam did love Chandra, towards the end he realizes the plan was not going his way and that Chandra will be punished for the crime. He lied in an attempt to save her but it was too late, he admitted that he truly loved his wife and had tried to take the blame for his sister-in-law’s death so she didn’t have to. He was also distraught knowing that he couldn’t do anything now and tried to see her the very last time too. I guess you can say their relationship was like a love/hate relationship. Chandra did love her

husband but did not want to deal with him anymore and Chidam did not respect her as he was supposed to but didn't want her gone.

Next, the lies that the brothers have told have affected their family. Throughout the story, there was a constant theme of lying. It kind of reminded me of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf", the reason why is that the brother started with a lie, and when they told the truth in the end no one believed them. Dukhiram and Chidam initially thought that if they had blamed it on Chandara it would be easier to get her out compared to Dukhiram and it was easier to replace a wife than a relative. "Chidam felt a sickening dryness in his throat. He stood up and said, "Thākur, if I lose my wife I can get another, but if my brother is hanged, how can I replace him?" In laying the blame on his wife, he had not seen it that way." (Tagore, 645). The lie was that Chandra had struck Radha in the head after Radha had attacked her. Which could have been believable since the two women were known to argue a lot. Nonetheless, the plan did not work, the reason why was because Chandra decided that she will take the blame and suffer the consequences.

"...Everyone was amazed at these replies, and Chidam was completely thrown off balance.

"She's not telling the truth," he said. "The elder wife first—" (Tagore, 646). This example shows the lie being uncontrolled. This brings me back to when I mentioned how the wives were treated by the husband. Chandra was probably fed up with how she had been treated, thus another lie was created. In her mind, this lie would have saved her from her problems. It's not like she didn't love him because she did, but this situation had probably been the last straw for her. "When her husband asked her to admit to the murder, Chandara stared at him, stunned; her black eyes burnt him like fire. Then she shrank back as if to escape his devilish clutches. She turned her heart and soul away from him... Such fierce, passionate pride! In her thoughts, Chandara was saying to her husband, "I shall give my youth to the gallows instead of to you. My final ties in this life will be

with them.”... Then please give it to me, sir,” said Chandara. “Do what you like—I can’t take any more.” (Tagore, 645-646).

In conclusion, I believe that Tagore had done a great job showing the conflict between a wife and a husband, how a lie can be uncontrolled, and you don’t know what you have until it's gone. Especially when you look at the dynamic between Chidam and Chandara, you see it more in-depth of their relationship compared to Dukhiram and Radha. It left me wanting to know more about what happened after this situation and with the brothers. I also believe it shows a good job of how justice is treated in each caste system as well.