

Action and Reaction-Chithra Fernando

Analysis of the plot

- A story that looks at middle class values and a false notion of piety satirically. Culturally related to Sri Lanka.
- As in Professional Mourners the narrator is a generation removed from the main protagonists and as a result of education maintains a distance from the assumption and values of his parents' generation.
- The title refers to the concept of Karma in Buddhism which holds the meaning that every action will have a kind of consequence.
- Loku Naenda the main protagonist is satirically portrayed from the onset of the story. She's an irreproachable and a vindictive woman who is known for her religious nature. She conducts public acts of "giving" in order to accumulate merits ensuring a better life. She helps others but she expects something from them in return.
- Loku Naenda decides to adopt a little girl called Kusuma. Though it is termed an adoption it is actually for servitude. Kusuma is very much a servant in the story.
- It is quite evident that although Loku Naenda was talking about giving, she never gave righteous thing to Kusuma's life. ex: -She didn't allow Kusuma to be an educate person, she prevents the marriage of Piyadasa and Kusuma.
- But Kusuma has a great resolve of strength and she is strong enough to bear the torments.
- At the end Kusuma becomes Loku Naenda's alter ego. Now Kusuma has transformed into the same kind of falsely pious, narrow minded woman that Loku Naenda was earlier and now Loku Naenda is firmly in the grip of her power.
- At the end of the story there's a clear action and reaction. The end reflects a complete reversal roles of two people.
- Mahinda and Mala can be seen as the epitome of a new generation. They are young and have a far broader outlook belonging to a new generation.
- Mahinda provides the thematic element of the story.

Themes

- Notion of Karma
- False piety
- The "dasa paramithas" the priest talks about the spirit of true giving in contrast to what Loku Naenda and others consider giving.
- Social and religious middle class values.
- Underlying frustration of an unmarried woman.
- Child adoption
- Appearance vs reality

Techniques

- A typically Sri Lankan story.
- The used diction has a typically Sri Lankan flavor with Sinhala lexical items and names. ex: -Loku Naenda, Kewum,,,
- Humour and irony
- First person point of view