

Adoption and Segregation: A Study on Parenting in Cathy Glass's Memoir A Long Way from Home

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Abstract

Parenting is the process of raising a child from infancy to adulthood. It involves a complex web of responsibilities that go beyond just providing physical care. Meeting child's basic needs, care for its health and developments, providing opportunities, setting boundaries and discipline, providing love and support, preparation for adulthood are some of the aspects of parenting. Possibly parents are more authoritarian, setting strict rules and expectations. Success and failure are based on good and bad parenting. Failure in parenting creates problems in children and family. The childhood problems are of wrong parenting. Most of the adoptive parents are not ready to understand their adopted children and their background, rather try to impose their expectations upon them. The unfulfillments of their expectations create aggression and take the peace and happiness from their family. The efforts put forward by them become nothing when their expectations are unfulfilled. The improper communication often leads to misunderstanding, which ends up in segregation. Parenting is not an easy task. The inability and ignorance make non-biological parents to rely on foster care but their vigour and steps to overcome the situations teach them lessons of life. The success and failure depend on love, understanding and tolerance.

Key Words: Parenting, Childhood, Adoption, Segregation, Foster care

Parenting the children is an unavoidable phase of man and woman who enter in family life. The parental phase of motherhood and fatherhood begins at the adulthood stage with more responsibilities. Running a family is not an easy task in single and united families. Their responsibilities increase when they bring forth children. They strive to meet the requirements of their children and their own. As the children grow their needs evolve to include education, emotional support, and guidance. Parents have a great part in fostering a child's physical, social and emotional development. They provide opportunities for exploration and building healthy relationships.

Parenting is not exclusive to biological parents. Foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, and other caregivers can all play a vital role in raising children. It is a lifelong journey where challenges and rewards of parenting evolve as children grow and mature. There may be moments of un-fulfillment, sometimes expectations and reality do not align. It is nice to remember that no parent is perfect. Everybody has their own limitations. Learning from experiences is awaited and is an essential part of the journey.

Adoptive parents are people who choose to raise a child that is not biologically their own. They go through a legal adoption process to become the child's legal parents and take on all the rights and responsibilities of parenthood. Beauty of the family lies in its diversity. Adoptive families come in all shapes. They can be single parents, married couples, same-sex couples, or any other type of family unit. The most important thing is that the adoptive parents are to be loving and committed to providing a safe and nurturing home for their child. Many adoptive parents choose to pursue adoption because they yearn to create a family and shower a child with love. Some may have biological children already and want to expand their family further. Others may be drawn to adoption due to a specific desire to provide a permanent home for a child from a particular background or age group. Regardless of their motivations adoptive parents share a common thread- a selfless love and dedication in building a strong and lasting bond with their adopted child.

Adoption varies based on its types. The common types of adoption are domestic infant adoption, foster care adoption, International adoption, orphan adoption, step-parent adoption and adult adoption. Among these types international adoption is the process of adopting a child from another country. International adoption is a complex process, and it is mandatory to work with a qualified adoption professional to ensure that the adoption is completed legally and ethically. The legal proceedings in both the native country of parent and child involve obtaining custody, finalizing the adoption, and getting an immigration visa for the child.

The couples who do not have children adopt children as per their wish and will. In *A Long Way from Home* the couples Ian and Elaine adopted Anna from an orphanage in a foreign country. Before adoption they prepared themselves to be well knowledgeable of collecting information regarding adoption through websites, reviews and through direct interviews with the persons who adopted the children previously. Despite not rich the couples saved money to adopt the child. The international adoption is expensive and time-consuming. They are prepared for the financial commitment and the wait time involved. Ian visited abroad often with his wife to see the child and for the legal process to adopt Anna from an orphanage with great expectations. Ian says, "It was widely thought in countries that practised international adoption that those adoption must be very wealthy,..." (39).

Ian and Elaine are a couple yearning to build a family, embark on the international adoption process. Their initial hope is met with crushing disappointment. However, the couple does not give up entirely. They agree to meet Anna, a two-year-old abandoned at the orphanage, and find themselves forming an instant bond. Anna, having experienced neglect and

emotional deprivation in her early years, struggles to form a secure attachment with Elaine and Ian. This neglect and deprivation can make it difficult for children to form secure attachments with caregivers later in life, as they have not learned to trust on adults to meet their needs.

Abandonment at a young age can be a traumatic experience for a child. This trauma can make it difficult for Anna to feel safe and secure in her new home, even with loving parents like Elaine and Ian. Children who have not had a secure primary caregiver in their early years may find it challenging to maintain a secure relationship with new caregivers. They might exhibit emotional withdrawal, clinginess, or resistance to forming close bonds. Anna might fear that Elaine and Ian would abandon her too, leading to emotional withdrawal or outbursts as she pushes them away to protect herself.

Biological or non-biological parents establish rules and expectations to help children learn self-control and navigate the world responsibly. Discipline involves teaching children appropriate behaviour in a positive and consistent manner. Expectations serve several important purposes, which help us plan, prepare, and navigate social situations. They motivate us to strive for goals and provide a sense of security. However, inflexible expectations can become a recipe for disappointment. When one hold onto a rigid idea of how things should be, there he or she fails to adapt to the inevitable curveballs that life throws. Unfulfilled expectations can trigger a cascade of negative emotions. Disappointment is the most common, leaving us feeling deflated and discouraged. Unmet expectations can also lead to anger, resentment, and even a sense of betrayal, especially if directed towards others.

Foster parents enter the system with idealistic expectations. They envision themselves providing a safe haven, showering the children with love, and witnessing a blossoming of trust and affection. Glass herself acknowledges this initial hope, describing the desire to be the family they never had. However the reality rarely aligns with these idealized visions. The children in the system often come from backgrounds of severe neglect or abuse. They carry emotional baggage, behavioural problems, and a deep-seated distrust of adults. This dissonance between expectations and the lived experience can be a source of profound un-fulfillment for adoptive parents.

The emotional toll of unfulfilled expectations the young girl Anna, who constantly tests boundaries and displays violent outbursts struggles to connect and reciprocate the love. This emotional distance can be incredibly draining, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Being uprooted from a familiar environment, even a neglectful one, can be stressful for a child. Anna is likely grappling with the upheaval of her life, along with the unfamiliar faces, routines, and expectations of her new home. This adjustment period can make it difficult for her to focus on forming a secure attachment with Elaine and Ian.

Forming a secure attachment is a complex process that takes time and patience. Anna's life in an orphanage, likely characterized by neglect and a lack of emotional connection. This can

have a profound effect on a child's ability to form secure attachments. In secure attachments, children learn to trust their caregivers as a source of comfort and support. Without this foundation, they may struggle to trust the adoptive parent like Elaine and Ian, even with their loving intention. Anna may need time to adjust to her new life and new caregivers before she can start to trust and rely on Elaine and Ian.

In family life children are prominent among parents of biological and nonbiological. After adopting Anna, as a loving father and mother they spend lot of money to purchase, and arrange her room with toys and other beautiful things. Elaine resigned her job to look after her child. Likewise her husband Ian also took maximum leave from his work to have a successful adoption process. But after adoption the behaviour of the child was not as expected and was completely reverse to their dreams and mind castle. This has taken away the peace from the family and their labour behind the adoption remained unfruitful. They underwent lot of struggles. The loss of life and the complex nature of the child together put them in an unhappy mood. The tension further has created lot of misunderstanding among husband and wife.

After adoption Elaine spend most of her time along with her adopted child, she has not maintained equilibrium in caring her child as well her husband. She struggles between the role of wife and mother. She is not a successful mother to her child and as well she is not a successful wife after adoption. The immediate and constant demands of caring for a child often take precedence, leaving little time and energy for the marital relationship. The child's dependency on the mother for basic needs such as feeding, comfort, and attention can make it challenging for her to shift focus to her husband.

Parenting, especially in the early stages, can be physically and emotionally draining. A young mother may find herself overwhelmed with tasks related to childcare, leaving her with limited energy for nurturing her relationship with her husband. In A Long way from Home Elaine undergoes lot of struggles between emotional and physical commitments. She becomes very tired and fails to prepare food and satisfy the basic needs of her husband. Becoming a parent can lead to a shift in priorities where the child's well-being becomes the primary concern. This shift is natural and necessary for effective parenting but can inadvertently lead to neglecting the marital relationship if not managed consciously. The lack of understanding might create problems between parents in family life.

Balancing childcare responsibilities, household chores, work, and personal needs leaves little time for nurturing the marital relationship. This lack of time can result in decreased quality time spent together as a couple. On the other hand lack of attachment and attention of mother and child would reflect through the strange behaviour and anger expressed by the child. In A Long Way from Home the young girl Anna struggles between the parental relationship of Ian and Elaine, as she is a neglected orphan she is strange to new households and routine, which are entirely different from orphan life style. Whenever she feels neglect and inattentive she uses to break toys and other things to expresses her anger. Elaine says, "... opened her mouth and screamed for all she was worth" (109).

Trauma and loss manifest as behavioural problems like aggression and tantrums. These behaviours can be frustrating and confusing for both the child and the adoptive parents. It is important to remember that these behaviours are often a child's way of communicating their emotional distress, and require a patient and understanding approach to help them develop healthier coping mechanisms. Ignoring this Elaine placed Anna under the care of Cathy Glass to have a positive change. In parenting Anna, Cathy learns to celebrate small victories – a tentative smile, a moment of genuine connection not fulfil the grand vision, but represent a more realistic path to fostering a positive impact on a child's life.

The transition to motherhood often involves a shift in personal identity. A young mother may struggle to balance her identity as an individual, a partner, and a parent, leading to uncertainties about how to allocate her time and attention. Both partners has significant role in adjustments when they become parents. A young mother may be focused on adapting to her new role as a caregiver, which can overshadow her previous role as a wife or partner. As a young wife and mother she struggles to spare time and pay attention to both the child and husband finally push them to feel avoided and neglected. Proper communication with reason fosters good understanding. Effective communication between partners can be challenging amidst the stress and exhaustion of parenting. Miscommunication or misunderstandings can further strain the relationship and make it difficult to prioritize the marital bond. The lack of effective communication can lead to misunderstandings and resentment between partners. This breakdown in communication might stem from differences in expectations, priorities, or emotional needs that are not adequately addressed. These challenges requires intentional effort from both partners to communicate openly, understand each other's needs, and find ways to support each other amidst the demands of parenting. It is essential for both partners to prioritize nurturing their relationship alongside their roles as parents, as a strong marital bond contributes to a stable and supportive family environment for the child.

The partners may carry personal issues or emotional baggage that affects their ability to connect with each other. Past experiences, traumas, or unresolved conflicts can hinder the intimacy and understanding necessary for a healthy relationship. Parenting challenges, especially in the context of fostering or adopting children who may have complex needs or behaviours, can strain even the strongest relationships. Differences in parenting styles, coping mechanisms, or the emotional toll of caring for vulnerable children can contribute to marital discord. External factors such as financial pressures, work-related stress, or family obligations can impact the relationship. These stressors may divert attention and energy away from the marital relationship, making it difficult for partners to prioritize each other. Cumming and Davies says, "Marital conflict is not an isolated occurrence in families, but is broadly relevant to notions of risky family environments ..." (5). Over time, individuals may grow and change in different directions, leading to a mismatch in values, goals, or life trajectories. This natural evolution can create distance between partners if they do not actively work to maintain their connection.

Emotional distance can develop when partners feel unsupported, unappreciated, or disconnected from each other. In times the Elaine who possessed multiple phases has not been appreciated for her roles. The Ian who is caught with stress and burden left Elaine. Elaine says, “Apparently her husband left them just after Christmas and Anna’s behaviour has deteriorated further since then” (163). This distance can deepen over time if not addressed, potentially leading to separation or divorce. In *A Long Way from Home*, Cathy Glass explores these themes within the context of fostering children and the impact on familial relationships. The novel likely portrays how these factors contribute to the separation between the husband and wife characters, highlighting the challenges they face in maintaining their relationship amidst their caregiving responsibilities and personal struggles.

The life of Anna transcends with emotional complexities of parenting with unimaginable hardship. By confronting the gap between expectations and unfulfillment, Glass reminds us that fostering is not about replicating a perfect family unit. It is about offering a safe haven, providing unwavering support, and celebrating even the smallest signs of progress.

Works Cited

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