

Image of modern woman in the novel, Partner

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ABSTRACT

In India from ancient time, woman is considered to be slender, tender, sensitive and self-less. Being a mother, daughter, wife, daughter-in-law is expected to be kind, generous and submissive. She had to take care of home and family. There is no economical, social, psychological independency for them. Mai, mother of Kiran and Mother of Shri are the victims of this culture. But still they have their own way of life and happiness. In post-independent era, the scenario has been changed a lot. Women like Manorama, Kiran, Damayanti get educated, earn money which gives them some liberty and feeling of independence. With the help of these liberties they may disturb or destroy the life of other family members or they may create heavenly happiness in the lives of the other. V.P. Kale has shown this gap of generation with its drastic changes effectively.

Key-words: Novel, Partner, modern woman, old and young generation, variants of woman nature

Introduction

V. P. Kale is an eminent Marathi novelist. He is considered as the master of story-telling. He has been felicitated with the Pu. Bha. Bhawe Award given by Government of Maharashtra to the best author. He was also felicitated by the Fi Foundation. He was the chairman of the Sahitya Parishad held in America. He died in 2001 but his literary work always keep pace with time and he can never be a story of the past. The beauty of human minds and thoughts captivated him, always. His literature is based on the appealing and pleasing thoughts. As a minute and patient observer of reality, he panned down the real life and sketched perfectly the real characters. He believes that each person with their exclusive combination of thoughts and behaviour is a 'pattern' and he sketched these patterns in his writing. He painted the picture of middle class family of bureaucrats, living in Mumbai in 1970s. He has minutely observed the families with their relations, stresses, views about each other as well as feelings of jealousy, hypocrisy, insecurity and absurdity.

Even the females who traditionally symbolize a kind hearted mother, obedient daughter-in-laws or sister-in-laws, an ideal wife go through the period of transformation. In the modern era, they symbolize the role of cunning mother, jealous sister-in-law, devoted but estranged wife. It does not mean that they do not have love, care or passion for their family but the situations, ambitions and overall vision of modern life have made them to follow the dark side of the coin. Mother of Shri, Mai, Mrs. Phanase and even mother of Kiran belong to the same generation who are getting old. Everyone of those have faced the long phase of life and even the grief of being dependent and helpless, still their approach towards life is different. Kiran, Damayanti and Manorama belongs to the young and modern generation. Kiran as well as Damayanti are hard-working and ambitious ladies whereas Manorama is jealous for others. Following are the analysis of the female characters:

Analysis

After the death of Mr. Dongre, his wife, Mai has decided to live her life alone. But loneliness in old age is a curse. She is in want of a company of somebody. Shri and Kiran also need a family member who can take good care of their son, Amit. As Mai is dependent, kind and submissive lady, She assures Kiran that she will be at her side whenever Kiran needed. Without any depression and painful memories of her family, Mai involved in Kiran and new born baby, Amit. She took a very good care of Amit, Kiran and even Shri. After the death of Amit, she also tolerated the blame of Kiran as, "We hired a lady to take care of our son whose own son could not survive". (Partner, 178), Mai does not mind the blame, as she knows that Kiran is out of senses due to the death of her only son, Amit.

Shri's mother is shrewd and calculative. She is much more complaining and less satisfied. She has more concern for Arvind, her elder son as he was premature, weak and irritating child from the beginning. She supports Arvind-Manorama more than Shri and Kiran. She is also reluctant to the marriage of Shri and Kiran. She never attended the wedding ceremony but gifted the both with some cash and gold bangles. She does not want to live with Kiran after their marriage. Even she does not support Shri and Kiran during the pregnancy of Kiran and even after the birth of Amit. She always makes a show of her dependency on the sons. Being very calculative, She is also not happy with the progress of Shri. She compares Shri with Arvind and shows her concern for Arvind. When Amit dies, it is believed that he faced it only because he was selected for the advertisement of the medicine of Glaxo Company. In fact, the mother has requested Shri to think of Ranjan, Arvind's son to participate in the competition but she feels happy for Ranjan as he is saved from death. But at the end, "Her face is plainly revealing her joy as Ranjan was saved because of the age-barrier." (Partner, 180). It hurts Shri a lot. He feels that the relations are just like cords which are unnecessarily binding him together. He wants to cut the cords down and free himself. The relation between Kiran and Shri's mother is also not very healthy. As a mother-in-law, she does not try to understand Kiran, not even try to make Kiran comfortable. Due to her hypocrite behaviour, Kiran does not respect the mother. There is a constant clash between the both which hurts Shri.

Kiran's mother accepts Shri as a son-in-law very easily and without any complaint or expectations. She knows that the essence of happy married life does not exist in economic stability. She supports the marriage without any grudge in mind. Kiran's father is a spiritual man who lives in the world of meditation and spiritual thought. She took the responsibilities of lives on her shoulders and want to complete it before death. After the marriage of Kiran, very soon she dies due to the heart-attack.

Mrs. Phanase is the neighbour of Arvind's family. Mother of Shri joins her every day in chanting and reading religious books. Both of them share their thoughts, ideas and experiences in daily life. She may have misguided the mother of Shri. Even Partner suggests Shri to be careful from Mrs. Phasane. It shows that the lady is troublesome and not the well-wisher but villainous in the disguise of neighbour.

Damayanti, Kiran's girlfriend who purchased flat in Mumbai then decided to go to Canada with her husband so she gave an opportunity to Kiran to purchase the flat. She also provides Kiran the furniture which she has prepared for her own flat. She is modern and kind friend of Kiran. She accepts the new way of living and be ready to go with her husband to Canada. She wishes best for Kiran and Shri.

Manorama is the wife of Arvind who does not approve of Kiran and Shri. She feels jealous and insecure about Kiran. She always puts her burden of responsibility on the shoulders of Shri or the mother. She very aggressively taunts Shri for his decision of register marriage. As soon as she is told about the wedding party at Taj Hotel, She monotonously replied, "What is so great about it? They have saved so much by having a registered marriage." (Partner, 77). She also have envy for the progress of Shri and beauty of Kiran. She like her husband is very calculating. Due to the illness and minimum income of her husband, she has always a feeling of insecurity and a mentality of grabbing the things.

For Shri, Kiran is so beautiful that he feels as if "She is born for ...Dahanukars, Kirloskars, Garwares and Aptes." (Partner, 07). She falls in love with Shri. Innocently informs her family and without any efforts gets permission for marriage. She fills colours in every dream of Shri. Being ambitious and modern women, she does a job, earns money but without any ego; she accepts Shri with his eccentric family. With lot of hard work, she manages the home and offers each and every happiness to Shri.

Most of the time, she gets irritated and annoyed by the behaviour of the mother of Shri, Arvind and Manorama. She takes help of Mai in her pregnancy as well as later. She helps, supports and loves Mai more than the family of Shri. She does not approve of Shri's idea to nominate Amit for Glaxo Competition but permits. She as a mother feels care for Amit, becomes sensitive and possessive for the son. Because of her more sensitive nature, she is unable to tolerate the death of Amit. In a fury and sorrow she blames Mai and Shri for the death of her only son. Her motherly feelings are more pathetic at the end.

Mai seems to be more understanding and empathetic towards Shri and Kiran whereas Mother of Shri is stubborn and not ready to adjust with the life. She cannot treat Arvind and Shri equally. There is always insecurity in her which poses many obstacles in her relations with other. Like Mai, mother of Kiran also thinks about the betterment and happiness of Shri and Kiran. V. P. Kale has deliberately sketched these ladies to express their natures effectively. Compare to Manorama, Kiran is more ambitious and pleasant. She never taunts or humiliate any one of Shri's family. Patiently she handles the situations but never ask for any help from the mother of Shri. She neither expects nor accepts the relatives of Shri. Readers feel sympathy for Kiran at tragic end of the novel. The innocent and beautiful lady like Kiran doesn't deserve it. Perhaps the readers may not forget her very easily.

Before falling in love, Shri was deprived of love in family. His mother is inclined to care for Arvind more than Shri. Manorama, sister-in-law of Shri is jealous and self-centred. The lonely and deserted life of Shri becomes interesting when Kiran comes in his life "...like a gentle breeze; yielding great pleasure! However, one may try; She cannot be held in hands...". (Partner, 07) Kiran brings happiness, calmness and satisfaction in the life of Shri. He is contended with her. He sometimes feels that he is not able to understand her but he takes efforts for it. Shri gets shocked and deeply hurt when Kiran blames him for the death of her mother and Amit. He feels hollowness and absurdity in all of the relations including wife. Partner is a keen observer of the nature of woman. Though he doesn't marry but he understands woman, her nature and status. His many comments about the mother of Shri, Kiran traces his philosophy of life. He does not fall in love but believes in affairs. Like a free bird, he never used to bound himself with limits. He guides Shri about the concept of love, beloved, marriage and marital life. He even compels Shri to understand Kiran. He justifies Kiran when Shri complains about her but everytime he avoids the invitation of Shri to visit his place. When Shri was being sandwiched between his wife and the mother, Partner

beautifully explained him a science behind these two indivisible characters of life. He motivates Shri to love, to respect, to understand and to support the wife as much as he can. After the death of Amit, Partner suggests Shri to meet Kiran as early as possible as she need Shri desperately. It shows that Partner has the proper depth to understand the modern woman, their behaviour and consciences better than a married person.

Conclusion

In India from ancient time, woman is considered to be slender, tender, sensitive and self-less. Being a mother, daughter, wife, daughter-in-law is expected to be kind, generous and submissive. She had to take care of home and family. There is no economical, social, psychological independency for them. Mai, mother of Kiran and Mother of Shri are the victims of this culture. But still they have their own way of life and happiness. In post-independent era, the scenario has been changed a lot. Women like Manorama, Kiran, Damayanti get educated, earn money which gives them some liberty and feeling of independence. With the help of these liberties they may disturb or destroy the life of other family members or they may create heavenly happiness in the lives of the other. V.P. Kale has shown this gap of generation with its drastic changes effectively.

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