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**ALIENATION OF AFFECTION IN MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR'S PARTY**

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**Abstract:**

*Mahesh Elkunchwar, originally a Marathi playwright, has carved out his name as one of the leading modern dramatists in Indian English Literature. His play Party (1976) points out the modern culture with the disintegration of human feelings of the people living in the metropolitan cities in general and cities like Bombay in particular. His major focus is to expose the superficial life of the pseudo-intellectuals living in Bombay who are possessed with the qualities like vanity, pseudo-empathy for each other, hollowness from within, pseudo-intellectuality and so on. The title Party is very apt and symbolic as it indicates that in a party; people come together only to kill the time, to show their vanity, to belittle the fellows instead of sharing or alleviating their sorrows. In the present play though the sharing of ideas or emotions take place, it seems to be superficial and hypocritical. The central character Damayanti, aged 45, who has hosted the party, has to face verbal abuses from her own daughter Sona. Though both Damayanti and Sona, including other characters too, are surrounded by several friends of their own acquaintances feel a deep sense of alienation.*

**Keywords:** *Vanity, Pseudo-Empathy, Pseudo-Intellectuality, S Sense of Alienation, etc.*

At the beginning of the play there is a conversation between Damayanti and a doctor. She has already hosted a party for her friends but later regrets for having hosted it. It is learnt that there is no communication between a mother Damayanti and a daughter Sona. During their conversation she expresses her grief that her daughter is not ready to speak to her:

She is being really strange. She refuses to speak to me. And when she does I think it's only to hurt me. I go to pieces listening to her  
(Elkunchwar, *Party*, 19).

Damayanti is seen requesting the doctor, who is like a ringside spectator in the party as he calls himself, to bridge the gap between her and Sona. She even doesn't like the party hosted by her mother. Further it is revealed that she has a baby which is not properly looked after by Sona. It can be guessed that the child is born out of illegal relationship between Sona and Sahani who is not seen throughout the play and he later deserted Sona. Damayanti confesses to the doctor that her daughter hates her. Sona is unmarried but has a child born from Sahani. Agashe who is a writer to be invited for the party wants to marry Sona but Damayanti objects this. No cordial relationship is seen between Damayanti and Sona, Sona and Sahani, Sona and Agashe and Damayanti and Agashe.

Mrs Damayanti Rane narrates her past and married life to her daughter Sona, her married life which was not happy one as she didn't have marital happiness from her husband because he was addicted to drinking. But Sona is in no mood to believe her mother instead she blames her mother saying that she herself is responsible for the miserable life both of her papa and her. Sona accuses her mother of cheating her father:



You are a parasite. You feed on other people's glamour, and you think it's yours. You wanted papa's money. And you want these people's glamour. You've got both. Clever, aren't you? You've managed both (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 62).

She considers her mother as her enemy for having isolated their lives from each other. No love, no affection or no sacrifice is seen between the mother and the daughter that make them alienated from each another.

Expressing her mental agony to Barve, Damayanti says, "I'm sick of everything. Sick of this business of living" (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 65). indicating that she is totally torn from within. She finds herself alone in the party which is hosted by her. Though she is surrounded by many well off people, she considers herself as a wretched and isolated person. She even regrets over being a woman and in the state of oldness. She pathetically says to Barve: "You wouldn't understand a woman. Why she lives, and dies, within herself" (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 68) She is seen helplessly seeking emotional support from her friend. Further she complains to Barve about her husband, who cared for money only, is wholly responsible for her alienated life. It is noticed that she is thrown away by her own husband and daughter. Her estrangement with the members of her family make her feel alienated from the rest of her glamorous world also. (I.e. people participated in the party):

.....I've looked after a useless male for twenty years without complaining. I've survived it all because I thought there was something to survive for. Then why is it all in ruins around me (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 67).

Damayanti's confession to Barve indicates her split personality and her mental aloofness from the rest of the world. Her position seems like a Chekhovian character Svetlovidov who also considers himself alone and neglected by society. As Mahesh Elkunchwar describes "Chekov as one of his 'gods'" (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 06) His feeling of solitude is noticed when he says, "Where art and genius are, there's no room for old age, loneliness and illness" (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 33). She regrets over the past indicating her negligence attitude towards the members of her family. Her dual attitude surfaces when at one point she blames her husband for his irresponsibility towards her and later she blames the men who are invited by herself for the party.

In the middle of the play the dramatist introduces another unmarried couple- Barve, 45, and Mohini, 30, who have been in live in relationship for seven years. In the party she drinks much wine that leads her to lose her both mental and physical control. Here the dramatist points out metropolitan life through the character Mohini; as drinking wine by a woman is not allowed or not accepted in middle class families. She gets angry with Barve for taking a shawl from Damayanti. When she starts babbling under the influence of liquor, her lover Barve tries to pacify her saying not to make a scene. Instead she says:

Do I make a scene? Hold me close. Just this once. For one minute. (Barve holds her, but without emotion.) Seven years. I loved you. And I've loved you more. And more. And you hurt me (Shudders) (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 38)

The statement made by Mohini shows that there is no close emotional bond between Mohini and Diwakar alias Barve though they have been living together for the past seven years. She has to utter twice regarding her love-making to Barve. He has pseudo-empathy for Mohini. She expresses her frustration over the state of being old, not having her own kids, over the loss of her voice as a singer and



having been neglected by her lover Diwakar. She is very much obsessed with her external appearance that also causes her mental distress. All these factors such as the colour of her sari, the colour of lipstick, the loss of her beauty due to her ageing make her isolated from the rest of the party-goers. Commenting on her own present state she says:

So I use make-up. But it's strange. The fashions these young girls flaunt. They look so fresh and blooming. I'd look ten years older if I happened to be with the crowd. I've lost touch with the outside these seven years. I'm so involved with Diwakar (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 45).

Here Mohini clearly points out her disturbed psychology and her state of being loneliness. The character Mohini in the play stands for modern culture which has glamour, status, and publicity from outside but from inside there is complete hollowness. It is learnt that she gave up singing only because of her paramour. Despite many warning from Sona regarding drinking much wine, she goes on drinking it that leads her to utter sentences with complete loss of sanity. She later while in communication with Sona reveals her private life to Sona:

I hate parties. I do. (Pause) Diwakar gets lost with people. He forgets me. And when he drinks... (Pause) I used to hate drinking once, but I drink now. You know, he snores all night, and I lie wide awake. Even when I'm drunk I can't sleep. I feel in dizzy. I want to snuggle deep into his arms but then I get scared he'll wake up and get angry....I lie down then, still and wide awake as my head spins with fatigue.(Pause) I'm telling you all this private stuff.....( Elkunchwar, *Party*, 45)

The dramatist here exposes the folly of party which is a symbol of modern culture. This party brings people together; these people gather with no emotional attachment. The purpose is only to show their superiority in terms of their knowledge, status, and property and so on. At parties only pompousness is shown as it is clearly highlighted by the dramatist. While talking to Bharat, Vrinda, one of the characters in the play, terms the party-goers as 'they are nothing but a bunch of show-offs' (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 47). Later the playwright satirises modern man through the character Diwakar. As Mohini is not satisfied with Diwakar both physically and mentally, she pours out her heart to Sona that she is deprived of marital satisfaction. The dramatist explores the psychological upheavals going in the mind of Mohini. She is able to outspoke her private life only when she is drunk. Her dual attitude surfaces as she herself says that she hates parties and drinking wine but here in the play she drinks wine being one of the party goers. The alienation of emotion is clearly noticed between Mohini and Diwakar alias Barve. On the other hand Barve also doesn't like the company of Mohini. He openly confesses to Damayanti that "I don't love her any more". (Elkunchwar, *Party*, 72) He has decided to go abroad only to avoid the company of Mohini. Thus Damayanti shares her painful experiences with Barve and he does the same. But in case of Barve, he is cheating and trying to avoid Mohini in the name of true love and finds sympathy from Damayanti that seems ridiculous and hypocritical.

Bharat and Vrinda, both unmarried, is another couple which tries to seek solace sharing each other's emotions. Both feels alienated from the society to which they belong. Vrinda makes a request to Bharat understand her, as she feels that she is misunderstood by other people. Later Just for fun's sake, she tries to flirt with him in the name of dance but Bharat being a simpleton runs into other room. On the other hand she praises him calling him as an original writer and she assures him of including his name in the list of the delegation that is going to the USA. She even assures him that one day he will become a popular writer like Agashe. Thus both of them support each other by giving pseudo- emotional support.



In another incident Sona requests Vrinda to cooperate her in keeping Agashe away from her as he, as per Sona's allegation, is pestering her all the time to get married to her. Instead of seeking support from her mother, she asks Vrinda to support her that indicates estrangement between mother and daughter.

Thus all the party-goers are frustrated from within. Each one is seen seeking solace from his/her mates. While exploring the psychology of the members of the party, the playwright has shown the emotional upheavals of the people assembled for the party which is only like a bunch of plucked flowers having no scent of its own or a party with bareness of emotions.

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