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Srashti Srivastava
Research Scholar,
University of Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Widow with sons: Ideal and real lives of women in the works of Premchand

Srashti Srivastava

Abstract

The scanty literature on women, however, still remains somber, especially in regards of modern history. Literature is constructed socially but it is too political. Writers have a spontaneous ability to capture the articulation in their works deeper human concerns and strong desires that are analyzed socially, academically, politically with the methodological constraints and concentration on the facts used to support a proposition based on ascertainable evidences, can ever convey.

The orientation of women to social reality and the 'ideals' of womanhood significantly formed by the models of womanly conduct, explained in the stories of Premchand [1880-1936] as the most eminent figure in the modern Indian history, who had a phenomenal impact on North Indians.

Keywords: Life, Women, Literature, Indian, History, Premchand

Introduction

The story has many perspectives to lives of women accumulating their identity in one particular house of this story astonishes the reader indeed. The vision is to think and analyze the Indian Literature particular world of Premchand depicted by him in this story of "Widow With Sons". Premchand stories to begin with, have always given a vibe of sensitivity, exploring the zenith of human emotions, depicting it's various colours and conundrums. So this story has an emotive tale too with the additional factor of women, showing it's various facts of personality.

Lives of women in the story

a. Life of Mother

Phoolmati, a dominating female, having an aura of forcibly demanding authority in the beginning of the story. Gradually, we see as the story evolves, her place of authority has been completely shattered.

Her, is the personality which is self-demanding and demanding equal respect from the sons and their wives. She is ready to give her own pleasures in suppressing the pain of her household, in the end gets nothing in return.

Her identity as a woman is in support of her daughter Kumud, whom she supports at every step. Phoolmati being uneducated, still knows that she, out of concern is ready to share her husband's property with her only daughter. Her strong head attitude; her support to stand next to her daughter's will of marriage reflects her non-discriminatory attitude and her strong belief in the concept of equality.

At the same time her inclination towards her daughter didn't make her less friendly or devoted towards her sons. When her son asks for money because he needs to get himself free from legal proceedings, she willingly offers him her jewelry without giving a second thought.

b. Life of daughter-in-law

The second character of the story is the eldest daughter in law. She being a woman was expected to be sympathetic towards her mother-in-law. She was neither sympathetic nor wishing good for her own sister-in-law. The main member of the family who reflected utter disregard for sharing the load of responsibilities and at the same time just believed in "destiny puppet" when in a reverential tone - "If a girl is lucky, she could be happy even in

Correspondence
Srashti Srivastava
Research Scholar,
University of Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh, India

poor man's house. If she is unlucky, she will cry even in a king's house. It is a drama of destiny", she said. She was least bothered about Kumud as she was merely a person who should be thrown to face the wind of destiny. Her role reflects the ruthlessness and mere selfish aspects of her personality. She dominates her husband and make him an equal partner in the business of disregarding his own mother and she gets successful too in doing this. The dowry idea in context of Kumud also propounded by her, reflects her mean mentality and hypocrisy. Her selfish trait made her actions and thoughts negative, projecting her in the light of self-possessed, insensitive and harsh character of the story. She shows the similar traits of her personality in the end of the story when in the heavy rain she lets her mother-in-law drenched to fetch water from river Ganga and her brother-in-law too said "Let her go, bhaiya. She has ruled over daughters-in-law for a long time. Let her atone for that". Phoolmati lost herself completely and lived a life worse than of an animal. "A woman living without soul" was her state. Alas! She never offers a helping hand to her old mother-in-law and becomes a silent spectator of the old woman plight.

c. Life of Daughter

The third important character of the house as woman whose character can be discussed is Kumud. Being the only daughter to her parents she was loved and pampered by Phoolmati. But after Kumud's father's demise, her brothers and sisters-in-law never treated her right. The story is meek on aspects of her personality. She was obedient and well mannered according to the societal norms. Following the general norms of typical Indian stage of do's and don'ts for a woman. She was helpless at some stage, herself as looking at her mother, the only support system she had in such a pitiable state. She accepts even to get married to an old man of 40 years, subduing to the pressure of her elder brothers. Her character portrays the vibes of obedience and not one standing for her rights and showing sprinkles of rebellious nature at all.

Review

Looking at all these instances, what we as reader could figure out is life of the mother was a non-complicated, extremely emotive, selfless, full of pride and dignity. But unfortunately the "softness" of her personality was also her "vulnerability" which was exploited best by her sons. She, being not aware of legalities, was in the end of story made to give all her savings to her sons. Her respect was shattered and her life in the end showed the merciless and the selfish attitude of her sons and their wives.

The Daughter-in-law never offered a helping hand to her old mother-in-law and became a silent spectator of the old woman plight. A dark shade of her character has enwrapped the complete story.

Daughter Kumud was an obedient and non-rebellion by nature, what we can even consider her a family oriented girl for whom family and it's reputation comes first.

Conclusion

Considering and discussing all three women, we can very well conclude and notice the discrepancy in "the state of existence of each woman" suffered in that household. An identity of a woman can make her go strong or can make her lame if any substance of her identity is broken. This is very well reflected in the story of Premchand that we have covered here. Identity is always defined in both external and

internal domain. In the current story all three characters have well reflected the conflict of their internal and external identity, getting restricted and confined in certain aspects and also expressing some shadows of strong worth at the other end. Premchand art of writing leaves us to analyze the specific dimension of each and every character in detail, hence make us wonder about the major question of Identity all together.

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