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HARVEST : A DARK REVELATION OF THE NEO CANNIBALISTIC FUTURE

ABSTRACT

Third world men are becoming mere commodities in the hands of first world imperialists. Relationships are getting more and more complex. The rich is exploiting the poor without any human concerns. World is shrinking while considering it's values. Manjula Padmanabhan's play 'Harvest' discusses, "a dark, bitter and savagely funny vision of the cannibalistic future that awaits human race". It is considered as a futuristic satire on how the third world countries are being taken away by the first world countries. A beautifully written play, set in dystopian future where the poor are forced to sell their bodies in order to cope up with the pace of colonizer's luxuries. By giving us a funny and light part in the beginning, the plot travels towards a dark ending.

KEYWORDS

Third world, first world, colonized, commodities, futuristic

Manjula Padmanabhan- born in 1953-is a fiction writer, artist and playwright. She is termed as India's first woman cartoonist and has written books for children too. Her play; Harvest won prize

in the Onassis prize for theater, in Greece. A play written in black humor- the little laughter it provides is capable of evoking mental agony. It puts a mirror up to the dark future of the poor

The setting of the play is Mumbai. And in the beginning, we come across with the main character of the play – Om, who stands and waits in a long queue with other youngsters, who have been lining up to sell their organs. Their restlessness reflects the pessimistic attitude. They are left with no options but to yield to themselves. They are like ‘goats at the slaughter-house. Our hero Om is signing up as an organ donor for Ginni who is an American woman. Its just because he is unemployed. Life of a lower middle class family without a job for the head of it will be unimaginable. Om doesn’t have any other solutions but to sign up the bond and to get ready for the donation through Inter Planta Services, Inc.

The whole story focuses around this small family. The first part goes well with the assistance and comforts provided by the first world representative Ginni through the company. Om and his family members are getting an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of technology about which they even haven’t heard of. Manjula Padmanabhan introduces a wide range of modern devices in the play to convey the futuristic setting- right from the stainless steel trolley instead of their old stove, running water, new toilet and the video equipment – a contact module Ginni used to convers with them. ‘She’ provides the family with all the comforts that they needed in order to stay happy and healthy. Those are capable of alienating man from nature and the self. Her concern is just to fatten up the calf before killing it.

Om is appeared to be having responsibility towards the other characters in the family ;his mother (Ma), wife Jaya and his brother Jeetu. But he turns his back when the guards of the company arrived to catch the ‘body’ which was signed for them. All the artificialities provided during the first part turns out to be the best setting for the proper reaping. Just as in the post-colonialist view men are not even exploited but are treated as mere commodities. They are ‘thingified’. Here men and women are treated as either fresh or less used ‘things’, they are to sold according to their usefulness. The third world poor assume that happiness is keeping themselves away from nature

and consuming the artificialities provided by the rich although for a short time. And a kind of acculturation happens.

Om, the bread-winner loses his petty clerical job and is forced to make a Faustian pack with interplanta services. Thus his family fall prey to the flesh market of Western world. Four of them are bound in a loveless relationship. Although It's Om who signs the bond, the company takes Jeetu instead. Jeetu as a male prostitute tries to break the notion of being a colonized. He never let anyone to own him, but just selling himself. He himself is the owner of his body.

He yells at the guards who reached to catch him "you fools can't you see I'm not your man."

And keeps a feeling of being 'wanted' as Jaya- Om's wife approaches him for sexual gratification.

Om on the other hand yields completely to the powers of the colonizers. He is told as impotent, in a deeper sense he is not capable of anything.

Whereas Jaya seems to be more realistic and genuine as she wants to complete herself by the act of sex with her brother in law. When Jaya hears Om has lied to the organ sellers that she is his sister, she wipes her kum-kum by saying, "my forehead burns, when I say the word 'sister'". As a lover of freedom she questions the norms by having sexual relationship with her brother in law. She acclaims the individuality which she never yielded before anyone. She even doesn't admitted the demand of Virgil – the real self of 'Ginni', to give him a child. From the beginning till the end, Jaya shows courage to be stern in her deeds.

"I've discovered a new definition for winning, winning by losing. I win if you lose"

Jaya's reply to the colonizer shows her aspiration to claim her self.

"If you want to play games with people, you should be careful not to push them off the board. You pushed me so far. Now there's nothing left for me to lose".

Ginni, the computer animated image of Virgil constantly watches the lives of her donor's family. She wants all organs to be fresh and healthy. Shamelessly peeps into the lives of Om and his family. Just like the colonizer puts a constant watch upon the colonized.

"Every sneeze, every belch"

Through an electronic module, she listens to them. Even if the module is off; it records everything. When the machine showed Ginni's face through it for the first time, Ma exclaimed,

“ahh who is this angel”

Ginni was also surprised to see Om through it. She cried,

“I see you, Oh my God! I see you! Is that really you? Auum Praycash?”

She is just like a consumer who search for the proper commodities. Ginni explains Om's family as

“a human gold fish bowl”

She is excited by the thought of fresh organs from Om's body.

“it's the most beautiful day of my life! I feel I've got hope, at last! And all because of you”.

It's just a reminder that besides having a psychological supremacy, the colonized caught hold of the poors' body too.

The character of 'Ma' represents a major portion of Indian women who are merely depending upon men for their needs. Being the victim of a patriarchal society, she cuts her chords with it. Depending upon her elderly son and the comforts offered by Ginni ; she thinks her life is settled. For her, Om is the bread-winner and the one who can take care of her needs. She never cares for Jeetu and Jaya. And even let the Inter Planta Services to take Jeetu instead of Om. She loses attachment with her own self and others. And feels complete by a super deluxe video coach which takes care of all her needs. The colonized who think that they reached the social status of the colonized by using some of their gadgets is well portrayed by the character of Ma.

Thus by the grisly pact made between developed and developing countries, the author holds a torch towards the upcoming future; where we can never experience equality on the grounds of being humans. Here exists only the rich and poor ; the abled and the disabled and the blacks and whites. If we want to bring out any changes, first we must filter our mindsets. Then start working for it. Padmanabhan's play makes its point clear by the title itself. A harvesting of human organs under

the legal protection. The two opposite groups represented by Om, his family and Ginni – the imperialist and the Inter planta services with their three guards. At the end, the first world wins. Author puts forward a complex future for us to handle.

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