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Human Relationships In The Works Of Sudha Murty And Roald Dahl – A Comparative Study



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Abstract: God made man in his own Image, and in the vast expanse of human life. Man has to utilize this gift of life to exemplify God's Glory. Ironically man lives a life only to fulfill his needs. Women placed in front of a prism refract a kaleidoscope of characters and problems after that she has to challenge day after day.

A woman gives out catalysis effect in every relationship she upholds. Be it her undying support for her spouse or creating waves of suspicion – all things revolve around her.

Keywords: Kaleidoscope of characters ,Alchemy of Life, Intimidating experience, Eeriness and humor.

INTRODUCTION:

Roald Dahl's creativity in bringing out the strife or pleasure a woman involves herself in is unimaginable. We notice the same woman in different shades and circumstances. The rays still beat down on her but like richest alchemy she proves her worth.

ROALDDAHL:

Roald Dahl is a well acclaimed as one of the most widely read and influential writers of our generation. A British novelist and a writer of children's fiction-he stretched the imagination of a child like no other. Hailing from Llandaff, Wales he was born on September 13,1916 to Harald and Sofie Magdalene Dahl.

Dahl's life was filled with tragedy and hardships. It was the many incidents that he experienced in his life that formed the basis for many of his stories. His works often reveal distaste for his schoolboy years. He was caned by his teacher and later sent to number of boarding schools which was an intimidating experience. They were also criticized for being violent, overall vulgarity and the negative portrayal of adults.

His career as a Children's author began after he had children of his own with his wife, the actress Patricia Neal. He attributed his success to them. He wrote many works like "Boy: Tales of Childhood" ; and "Going Solo", about his adventures during World War II. It was after his crash , when he fractured his skull and was recovering that he had strange dreams which inspired his first short stories.

He was encouraged by C.S.Forester, to write about his exciting RAF adventures. Forester's intention was to write an article on the same but, Dahl wrote a complete story on the same. This was published in the 1st August 1942 issue.

This propelled him into a career as a writer.

Dahl used to hand out with the sophisticated, rich

and elite society. Most of his stories were so fascinating that he was encouraged to write them for Vanity Fair. This sparkled his literary career.

One of his main hobbies was reading. Some of his favorite novelists and adventure writers were Rudyard Kipling, Captain Marryat, H Rider Haggard and G.A.Henty. Their books propagated a kind of heroism and masculinity that later influenced his life and his won writings.

His books are full of imagination, thrilling, humorous with a mixture of grotesque and comic. The characters stand out from the common place. They are deceptive and are not as they appear to be. There is an air of sarcasm, mystery, eeriness and humor in his stories.

He writes on the consequences of greed, death, revenge and other dark topics or sides of human nature. Many critics believe that this is the key to his success with young readers. He successfully wrote adult short stories which were sometimes silly, gripping and also a bit disgusting.

A number of short stories are extracts from the diary of his fictional work Uncle-Oswald-whose sexual exploits form the subject of these stories.

His mother, Sofie to whom he dedicated his memoir, Going Solo was the primary influence on his life. He was the apple of her eyes and stoically endured Roald's departure to the wilds when he disappeared into East Africa. He was an employee of Shell Oil and then a war time recruit in the RAF-an inhuman moment in history. This explains why he ended up being so hard on the other women in his life, so eager to play the indulged son, being witty at one point and rude on the other than act as a responsible respectable adult.

His mother went through a lot of difficulty in trying to educate her son according to the wishes of the father. He died of leukemia at his home. Gipsy Home in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire on November 23,1990. He is buried in the cemetery at the parish church of St.Peter and

St.Paul.

Hence, we notice in his writings that the authoritarian adults are frequently the victims of vicious revenge. The oppressors are punished. There is a sudden twist packed with mystery in the stories.

He was accused of sexism by the feminist in England. Women were treated nothing more than scabs, which had to be put up with until the time came to be plucked away.

Each of his stories is real and convincing. They highlight the low status of women –always being oppressed by men. Men have always depicted themselves as the stronger Sex because of their physical strength and ability. Men change relationships just as easily as they change their attire. Even after taking that great vow of marriage, they still search deeply for love beyond. They are callous to the sentiments and ardor of the woman in their life-their wife.

The characters portrayed by Dahl in his short stories are real and bear great resemblance to the modern day woman. The situations are apt, the plot is real and we are one with the character. We understand what goes on in the mind of the woman. She is perpetually depressed, oppressed and suppressed. In addition to that, she is deprived of all joys and happiness. Moreover, the beauty of her mind, her rational is blanketed by the man's dominant, assertive and daring roles. She is even shunned by society as being a weaker sex-not capable of defending herself.

The role of the woman was to look after the family, the children, prepare their meals, was the clothes, being submissive to their husbands and perform all social, household and family responsibilities. She was a mere charwoman, enslaved because of these duties and chores which she had to accomplish.

They never drank a drop from the spring of happiness. Their roles were well defined and many of them had no ambition or goal in life. Although they were tied down by the men folk, Dahl in his stories saw to it that he rusticated them. There were always surprise endings and a twist in his tales. They were like tyrants and never like to see their spouse either at leisure or giving loose to their soul. Not only were they dependent but also intimidated. They were looked down upon as mere play things and considered as baubles. Time's tragedy is evident on their aching face, the light within their brain has also being extinguished and thus have turned them naïve.

Dahl also depicts women as an epitome of mystery and wickedness. They have been given the status of a harlot, a prostitute, a sex symbol to seduce and entice men. She radiates evil, wickedness and out to avenge the tyrants death. He emphasized a lot on sex and even wrote some violently erotic stories. This sets the characters apart. They are shown in poor light. The position of women down the centuries has changed partially. Society still looks down upon them as they are some who regard them as the weaker section or sex.

The women wears a number of hats. These days she is ambitious, determined, with a strong will power to face and challenge the so called stronger sex. Some women in our present generation pose as examples- like Sonia Gandhi, Jaya Lalitha, Connalisarice, Arundathi Roy, Maneka Gandhi, Late Kalpana Chawla, Sania Mirza, Kiran

Mazumdar and many others. Many of them also emerge from our history books like Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Joan of Arc etc., Their life and experience are left behind for us to follow, to empower us and to make a difference in society.

As the saying goes behind every successful man there is a woman, stands true even till this day. Men are logical beings; sometimes their wisdom is consumed in confidence. But on the other hand, women are emotional as well as logical.

Women should be given equal rights. They must be career oriented and come out from their shell that society had put them into. They assume various roles - a wife, a mother, a sister, teacher, house maker and so on. When we are educated, we are empowered all this process results in financial stability which we call independence.

No man has the right to bind a woman. All were created equally in the sight of God, no doubt women are next to men but she is respected equally to man. Thus, Dahl's portrays the darker side of women-vicious, haunting, wistful and even a seducer.

Dahl wrote over more than sixty short stories. Some of his children's works were also televised. His first children's books was 'about mischievous little creatures that were part of the RAF folklore. He also went on to create some of the best loved children's stories of the 20th century. Some include 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', 'Matilda' and 'James and the Giant Peach'.

He was also successful as a writer of macabre adult short stories. The stories had a dark sense of humor and a surprise ending. His short story collection 'Tales of the Unexpected' was adapted to a successful T.V. series. A number of his short stories are extracts from the diary of his fictional 'Uncle Oswald', a rich gentleman whose sexual exploits form the subject of these stories. He had written any such work which included a mixture of recipes, family reminiscences and his thoughts on favorite subjects such as chocolate, onions and claret.

'Charlie and Great Glass Elevator' (1972) is a sequel to 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. 'The BFG' (1982) was made into an animated film in 1989. Big Friendly Giant (BFG) represented the good adult archetype and the other giants being the bad adults.

Some of his short story collections include, 'Over to You', Ten stories of Flyers and Flying (1946). 'Someone Like You' (1953), 'Kiss Kiss' (1960), 'Switch Bitch' (1974) and man many others.

His non-fictional works include 'Boy-Tales of Childhood' (1984), this was an autobiography of Dahl up to the age of sixteen. It includes his school life in Britain.

'Going Solo'(1986) was a continuation of his autobiography. Here he delves into his life in Tanzania before joining the war right up to becoming one of the last Allied pilots to withdraw from Greece during the German invasion. There are other adult short story collections like 'The Best of Roald Dahl' (1978),

Most of the characters we come across are strange, weird and suspicious. In his short story 'The Landlady', he portrays a woman with two sides to the same coin. She is warm, affectionate and hospitable.

"She was about forty-five or fifty years old, and the

Moment she saw him, she gave him a warm Welcoming smile”.

Later in the story, we find another aspect of the woman. She turns out to be a taxidermist who mysteriously works her way in convincing the young boy to stay on.

Dahl portrays a woman who is all out to capture her victim. She lures him, and no one will ever doubt a woman of that age. The word woman here conjures up a ghostly figure, some one who is secretive, haunting and has eerie surprises awaiting.

He never seems to have a good understanding of woman –especially her emotional strengths. In this story, the Landlady’s loneliness and emptiness within herself shows that women had a very low status in society. We notice similar threads of depression and anxiety in other stories. In “William and Mary” a wronged wife takes the ultimate revenge on her deceased husband. He was a strict disciplinarian and never let her be.

Women these days still face the same hazards from their regimental husbands. They are forced to live silent lives behind the curtains. We can identify with the character Mary when we see husbands who are impersonal to their wives.

“.....and every now and then a pair of eyes would glance up from the book and settle on her, watchful, but strangely impersonal.....”

Even though women place all their trust and confidence in their husbands after years of commitment – the relationship between them seems to deteriorate. The women of today have emerged from their shells and blossomed into beautiful ambitious human beings. They are no more bound by their husbands like seen in this story.

The sacrifices that women make to enhance their status, clearly shows a different woman in the 21st century. She is career oriented and this makes her a responsible citizen.

Dahl always saw to it, that the wicked were punished. The oppressors were defeated. It was always the oppressed who were victorious and jubilant.

It is very sad to see that men are sometimes sadistic. They truly exercise the false statement of women being the weaker sex. They are intimidated and deliberately tormented at the clutches of their husbands.

In ‘The Way up to Heaven’ Dahl also allows his characters to avenge against their oppressors. Mrs.Foster suffered from a queer phobia, a pathological fear of being late. Instead of the husband sympathizing with her, he increases her misery by keeping her waiting.

However, the women characters depicted by Dahl clearly shows their commitment to their spouse. They have spent the best years of their life together, believing and loyally serving them. What should be appreciated is that she never doubts or questions them.

Women have kept up to their traditions and deeply respect their spouse but not at the cost of being trampled over by them. This is because, now they are educated and this has empowered them to fight back and face challenges. Thus, Dahl in this story supports the women, where he allows her to avenge against her husband.

In the above stories, we notice a woman, who is suppressed, subjugated, deprived of pleasure,love,emotions and then emerges triumphant towards the close of the plot. We also have a different status given to her as a harlot,a prostitute –more negative attributes, the dark side of human nature-through his violently erotic stories.

“Madame Rosette” is a short story narrating the life of three pilots while they were vacationing in Cairo. Women are the subject of discussion and desire. These were some of the psychological effects of war. But what is most important is that the same women is an object of sensual pleasure.

Moreover, the men would spend all their time and money to keep them. Dahl doesn’t show his women characters with promising careers. They are insignificant, anonymous and meant only to entertain and satisfy the deep passions of hungry men. No doubt even today, we find the same situation in certain pockets of society where women agents run brothels to earn their living. This happens due to the fact that the women are not educated.

SUDHAMURTY:

Sudha Murty’s Mahashweta deals with the story of Anupama and her marriage with Anand. The way a woman is treated in today’s world stands true in this Novel. Mahashweta is an inspiring story of courage and resilience in a world marred by illusions and betrayals. This poignant tale offers hope and solace to the victims of the prejudices that govern society even today.

Anupama’s fairytale marriage to Anand falls apart when she discovers a white patch on her foot and learns that she has leukoderma. Abandoned by her uncaring in-laws and insensitive husband, she is forced to return to her father’s home in the village. The social stigma of a married woman living with her parents, her stepmother’s continual barbs and the ostracism that accompanies her skin condition force her to contemplate suicide. Determined to rebuild her life against all odds, Anupama goes to Bombay where she finds success, respect and the promise of an enduring friendship.

CONCLUSION:

Truly speaking, any person especially women need to be loved. If they are left to make decisions on their own at a very young age without any guidance, may prove fatal to them. Being bound by peer pressure would enforce them to go on the wrong path. The stories bring out pathos as well as humour.

The works of Roald Dahl and Sudha Murty depict the pathetic conditions of women inspite of a progressing society.

I would like to bring out the simplicity and predicament of a woman by quoting this poem by Roland Tembekai Dempster, which is very appropriate. Men plan the life of the women in their lives and never accept them as they are.

AFRICA’S PLEA

“If I were you”
But you know
I am not you
Yet you will not

Let me be me
 You meddle, interfere
 In my affairs
 As if they were yours
 And you were me
You are unfair, unwise,
Foolish to think
That I can be you,
Talk, act
And think like you
 God made me me
 He me be me
 For God's sake.

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