

Redefining Relationship in the selected Short Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer with reference to Gimpel the Fool, Short Friday, One Day of Happiness

R. Vennila Nancy Christina,

Asst. Prof, Department of English, Sree Saraswathi Thyagaraja College, Pollachi,

Abstract: *God created man as his mirror reflection. He incorporated all his traits in the mind of man. The first man was the replica of God, who was ascertained with the power to rule the entire world. Love, passion, compassion, care, affection and relationship are the most beautiful traits that were sown in the human heart. These traits were so imbibed within human, that all these characteristic features were termed as humane. It is this human nature that differed man from animal. Seeing the lonely state of man, god created woman-Eve, from his rib bone. Hence relationship was formed. Next to god it is literature that glorifies and comprehends the most amazing, intrinsic and complex nature of relationship. We have many great writers who have portrayed the astonishing power of literature in a picturesque manner. Isaac Bashevis Singer, Jewish American writer is one among them. Born in Poland he was the victim of holocaust. Singer's family has produced many great writers. This paper will concentrate three of his short stories Gimpel the Fool, One Day of Happiness, and Short Friday. These stories are the testimony of Singer's efficacy in presenting the complexity of relationship with an innate care of a writer .*

Key words: *love, man, relationship, woman, acceptance*

I. Introduction

Man is the unique creature, who can't exist without relationship. It enchants him, entertains him and finally exhausts him. In spite of the awareness that he possesses about the delicate and intrinsic traits of relationship; he still strives to reach its excellence, with sheer ray of hope. Literature is the most beautiful platform, through which the intricacies of relationship can be portrayed. And many more writers have successfully used this canvas to paint the variant colours of relationship. Isaac Bashevis Singer, a Polish born Jewish American writer is a master in the art of depicting the delicate human relationship. His work focuses not only on the life's of the Jews, but also he emphasizes the prime fact of relationship. This paper concentrates the way Singer redefines relationship in his short stories Short Friday, One Day of Happiness and Gimpel the Fool. These stories envisage the various facets of relationship. His characters are tossed between the ends of life in the process of maintaining a healthy relationship.

One Day of Happiness is the story of a twenty four year girl, Fela Bialer and her love for Adam Pacholski. Fela Bailer, daughter of a rabbi falls in love with General Adam Pacholski in a crazy way. Though she is a twenty four year girl, she always thrives in a fancy world. Her affiliation towards fancy makes her to fall in love with Adam Pacholski the most adorable General. With love in heart, she declines all the marriage proposals that are being sought to her by her parents. She writes a letter to Adam and beseeches him to spend a half an hour time with her. She even manages to steal her mother's chain in order to present herself applicable before her love. Infused with love flame, even theft doesn't seem to be a sin for the rabbi's daughter. She does lot of homework to make her look pleasing before the general. After all it is the beautiful woman, who will rank first in the love race. Poor Fela, with her modest beauty and innate glow, manages to present her graceful before Adam. To the wonder of Fela, Adam behaves in a different way. His gentleman behaviour enhances Fela's adoration for him. Back in Adam's room Fela encounters a very different Adam. With all his romantic ideals and erotic thoughts, Adam seduces Fela. Adam chases Fela out of the room. Fela as the victim of the bitter reality reaches her house. Unable to withstand the shame that she has cast upon her parents, she cuts her hand. When Fela sinks herself into the death there arrives the messenger from the General with a bunch of roses-A token of love from Adam to Fela

Gimpel the Fool is the story of an innocent man Gimpel and his most tactful wife Elka. Gimpel, an orphan is brought up by his grandfather, with the entire innocence of the world thrust upon his shoulders. To put in other words; Gimpel is the embodiment of stupidity. Cheating Gimpel is not a tedious task. Gimpel is so gullible that, he goes to the extreme of believing that moon has fallen into Turben. To fool Gimpel is the leisure activity of the village people. His marriage with Elka is the epitome of his stupidity. Within four months of their marriage life, Elka gives birth to a baby boy and also she successfully triumphs in making Gimpel

believe that the child as his own. The schoolmaster tells Gimpel that “the very same thing had happened to Adam and Eve.” Gimpel, the fool, showers the boy with all the love that he owns as his legacy. He may be a fool, but he is not miser in sharing love. He accepts the child as the will of the God. Gimpel happens to see Elka with a man in her bed, which Elka again overcomes by exploiting the innocence of Gimpel and manages to tell it as her shadow. Elka lives with Gimpel for twenty four years and bores him four daughter and two sons. Gimpel has fathered none among the six. Elka reveals this secrecy of her long life to Gimpel in her death bed. She reinforces that her life is nothing but she always succeeded in fooling Gimpel, her husband.

Short Friday is about a tailor Shmul-Leibele and his wife Shoshe, who are the man and woman of perfect match. Leibele and Shoshe practices all the norms that a Jew is supposed to follow. This story takes place on the shortest Friday. Shoshe is a barren, but Leibele’s love for her is unquenchable. On that short Friday, Shoshe sets up the oven for the Sabbath and goes to bed. After love making, in their deep sleep Leibele and Shoshe realizes it as no longer as a dream rather than they visualize the fact that they are dead. Both Leibele and Shoshe achieve this transition simultaneously. Experiencing the ecstasy of death, Leibele recollect a verse “lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided”

In the above said three short stories, Singer has presented relationship in a unique and different format. All the three stories are woven around man and woman relationship. From time immemorial scholars, poets and philosophers are trying to unravel the complexity hidden behind this relationship. Singer with his unique observation and presentation has set a very different background for a man and woman relationship. Fela in One day of Happiness reminds the Tamar in the bible, daughter of King David who after raped by her Amnon was hated by him to the worst. The love that Amnon has towards Tamar mutates into the worst form of hatred. Right from the biblical time, no doubt women are the victims of such hatred and love. Fela, a crazy girl of her age, fails to differentiate love and lust. She pays her life for her stupidity. It has become an undeniable norm of the world that a woman who is in love or seeks love should be beautiful. Fela in the process of gaining her beauty she steals from her mother. She is least bothered about the norms of her society. To meet Adam, her godly love is the prime motto. Mere glance of Adam at the Café Rzymianska, becomes a life line for her. At this juncture it is very vital to comprehend the subtle and scintillating aspect of relationship. Fela’s adventure to meet the general reveals the significance that she bestows for her love. In this exercise, she never fails to maintain her appearance. Though she is crazy in character, she is consciously cautious about her appearance. Adam’s appreciation of her beauty kindles the greatest happiness within her that she has never experienced. Poor humans, they get flattered even in the treachery of the fellow one and Fela is not an exception to this human trait.

Succumbed to the plight of Adam, she dares to visit his room. Her fear of God and all her father’s preaching stands vain at this act of Fela. Probably her guardian angels would’ve screamed to save her. Adam on the other hand, appears to be more barbaric in the way he treats Fela. His eccentric behaviour, makes Fela to believe that she is yet another woman in his dairy. When he literally chases her out of his room, Fela is engulfed by humiliation. Her decision to die by committing suicide and the arrival of bouquet from Adam substantiates the stupidity and also the elegance of relationship. Fela, daughter of Rabbi, fails to recognize Adam’s love for her and opts death as a better solace. On the other hand Adam, with his arrogance, tackles Fela and her body with negligence, which makes poor Fela to commit suicide. Eventually the relationship blossomed in the bosom of Fela withers in one day of happiness.

Singer’s characterization of Gimpel and Elka is extremely different from that of Fela and Adam. Unlike Fela, here it is the Gimpel who gets fooled and fooled again. But for his foolish acts, Gimpel is no more than a lay man. It is too bad; to be too good and Gimpel is the victim of his overwhelmed goodness. He believes in whatever he hears. He possesses the elated trait of believing people not only because he is a fool, but because he doesn’t want the people to get cheated by letting know his wisdom. His innate feeling, not to hurt others enables him to accept himself as gullible. Singer is at his excellence by creating such a marvelous character. Gimple wants everyone around him to be happy. It is this state of Gimpel that convinces him to accept the son of their four month marriage. Fatherhood is a wonderful state. Unlike mother, a father bears his child in his bosom. He nurtures, feeds and caresses his child with an unsurpassable affection. Gimpel with the above said quality of a father accepts the son of his marriage who doesn’t own his blood. A father is not a mere sperm donor he is above than that. He has got some celestial responsibilities and which Gimpel performs with utmost care and sincerity. Gimpel is a type of man who bears everything and says nothing. Elka exploits this trait of Gimpel. Adam in One Day of Happiness realizes that fragile and innocent nature of Fela and exploits, where as in the Gimpel the Fool, Gimpel is the victim. Both Gimpel and Fela subjugate themselves as victim, just because of their love and their vow to maintain this love, whatever may be the turmoil. Gimpel accepts all the children that are not his as his own blood. Elka’s confession in her death bed to Gimpel doesn’t appear to be a confession; rather it appears as Elka’s final proclamation of how she maintained her consistency in fooling Gimpel. Her life is nothing but she is victorious in fooling Gimpel. It is really a great wonder that Gimpel is not infuriated at the

confession of Elka rather he appears to be amused. He never curses Elka, but he confines himself in solitude. Gimpel asks, "What's the good of not believing? Today it's your wife you don't believe; tomorrow it's God Himself you won't take stock in." In his dream when Elka really confesses, he pities her. Her amendments in hell make Gimpel to feel sorry for her Elka. He calls her "poor thing!" It makes one to wonder, is it possible for a character to pardon the adultery of his wife? Singer gives an affirmative answer by presenting the character of Gimpel. Singer has elevated the magnanimity of Fela in a distinctive way. As the victim of rape one would expect the author to present Fela as cursing Adam. But she acts in a strange way. Singer has characterized her so. She commits suicide. When she is aware of the impending death, she forgives him. What kind of characters are Gimpel and Fela? Are they Fools? Or Are they lunatics, who want to maintain relationship at the cost of their life?

Singer answers the above question, with his art of characterization of both Gimpel and Fela. They are not fools or victims. By embracing the mask of foolishness, they sustain to maintain relationship. Their act derives a purpose in the life of Elka and Adam. Gimpel and Fela are well aware about the magnanimity of relationship, which they don't want to collapse. Fela, though initially, appears to be revolutionary against her orthodox parents; she prefers death to prevent her parents name from getting tarnished. She dies happily. And she knows pretty well that this how it will end one day or other. Adulterous and an unreliable love are paid with the most precious thing –love.

In Short Friday there exists, a mutual compatibility between Leible and Shoshe. In no way they deviate themselves from their normalcy. To be very pious and disciplined are their basic traits and they are devoted to it ardently. There is neither adultery nor inconsistency in love. Unlike Adam, Leible seeks the permission of his wife and also considers sex without love as sin, which seems to be the rarest quality of a man. He does act according to the Word. And Shoshe, unlike Elka and Fela, she behaves matured and follows the doctrines of the Word. When Leible and Shoshe realize they are dead and buried, fear doesn't engulf them, rather they rejoice that they are ever united in the kingdom of God. They await the God's angel with hope and love that has twined them for years together.

God created man as his mirror reflection. He incorporated all his traits in the mind of man. The first man was the replica of God, who was ascertained with the power to rule the entire world. Love, passion, compassion, care, affection and relationship are the most beautiful traits that were sown in the human heart. These traits were so imbibed within human, that all these characteristic features were termed as humane. It is this human nature that differs man from animal. Seeing the lonely state of man, god created woman-Eve, from his rib bone. Hence relationship was formed. Next to god it is literature that glorifies and comprehends the most amazing, intrinsic and complex nature of relationship. Singer presents this relationship in an entirely peculiar fashion. Gimpel-Elka, Adam-Fela, Leible-Shoshe, all have more or less parallel relationship. But their approach towards it differs their destiny. Gimpel is so pure and committed that he even loves his adulterous wife and for him paradise is the utmost asylum, where as Elka toils in hell for her sin. Gimpel, in the extreme of stress urinates in the dough that he kneads for the village. His conscience appears to him as Elka in the dream and he leaves the village. Adam-Fela possesses a different texture; their affair doesn't have legality or intricacy. It is merely carried away by physical attraction. Hence Fela chooses to commit suicide, completely deviating herself from the path of Paradise. But for Leible-Shoshe their love is perfect, pious and they adore their love in a godly way, hence they fly to paradise. Singer in these three short stories proves his caliber as the master in the art of depicting human relationship. Life without love is so sick and devastating, as a Jew –one of the most deprived races on the, Singer is well acquainted with this fact. Hence he has embellished this fact in his creation with an air of zeal and authenticity.

Reference

Primary Source

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