

FEMINISM IN “A STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE” PLAY BY TENNESSEE WILLIAM

P REKHA

BHARATH INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

Life is a lonely idea, a lonely condition, so terrifying to think of that we usually do not. And so we talk to each other, write and call each other short and long distance across land and sea, clasp hands with each other at meeting and parting, fight each. The focus Williams' play is not on characters reveals themselves the full reality of their inner disharmony. The theme of Williams seems to be the utter loneliness of man in a world without beliefs, and man's chief enemy is time. Tennessee Williams is a major American dramatist as Henri Ibsen, whom he admired, dwelt upon several controversial Subjects. His plays made dramatic history not only thought their phenomenal successes but also by leaving each succeeding ideas. His handling of such themes as homosexuality, emasculation, drug-addiction, venereal diseases and cannibalism kept the greatest of his admirers guessing about what he would deal with next. He always seemed to flout the social and moral code by rebelling against it. In his personal life he was more or less a travelling worker,, always o the move. His love life and his frank confessions about it left his friends cold. On the positive side he earned the enviable reputation of an artist who would know, understand and interpret the feminine sensibility and aspirations dramatically, something that no one else had done as successfully.

KEYWORDS: success, emasculation, loneliness, aspiration, travel etc.,

INTRODUCTION

Named Car Named Desire is the pathetic story of Blanche DuBois, a sensitive girl, who comes to stay with her sister Stella. Her brother-in-law, Stanley, rapes her, and this event becomes catastrophic for Blanche. She is never the same afterwards. Her need for protection takes her from pillar to post, without any solution. Her southern temperament adds to her woes. She is shown sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of isolation, from which she never escapes. At last she ends up in a mental asylum.

When we peep into Blanches' character, many factors come to light, which cause isolation in her life. Like other characters of the major plays of Williams, Blanche also suffers because of being a southern lady. She has got all the manners, behaviors, and even fashions of an old south that do not have any importance in the present world.

Another factor for isolation in her life is lack of adjustment. Neither can she adjust herself to the new circumstances and environment nor is she ready to make any compromise or reconciliation with them. After seeing the rude and brutal habits of Stanley, Blanche becomes much annoyed and irate, and complains to Stella about such behavior.

Blanche cannot exist like others. She is ready to meet the consequence of her indifference. Towards the end of the play, isolation reaches its climax when she is taken to the asylum, although she is much frightened when a doctor and a matron come to take her. The doctor understands her problem, and taking one quick look at the fallen southern belle, resolve to help Blanche salvage her self-respect. He removes his hat, speaks to her in a courteous language, and raises her from the floor. Blanche instantly brightens up and walks out with him, because the gentleman had shown her the courtesy and respect due to highborn lady of the south. The illusory world which is a common characteristic of the isolated character of Williams causes isolation in the life if Blanche also. She suffers from illusions which shut her eyes from the facts and realities. The important illusion, which she still considers to be real, is about her past life of Bella Reve, where she led a genteel and well-cultured life.

Her illusions of her past make her odd and create isolation in her life. This fact comes in the way of her adjustment in her speech and actions. She clings pathetically to her clothing and furs. She tries to be above the environment into which she has descended. Her conceptions and thoughts seem fixed on a decadent past, while her present surroundings are so palpably alive and vital. Her illusory world provides a shelter to her frustrated and isolated life.

Frustration in love is one of the important reasons isolation in the life of Blanche. Since her youth till she is carried to the asylum, she did not get true love from anybody. She is always in search of love but never gets it. At the age of sixteen, she was married to a young boy. She loved him very much. But the marriage proved to be an unfortunate one to her. After her marriage she came to know about the homosexuality of her husband, which was a severe blow to her. This was not the end of her frustration but the beginning. One day her husband committed suicide, which caused further isolation and loneliness in her life.

The symbol of The Glass Menagerie, which is full of little glass animals, suggests the isolation, fragility, and lonesome soul of Laura. They have to be protected from the malice outside world. This is a dominant symbol which reveals the isolation in the life of Laura. Williams also suggests that like the glass animals, the life of Laura is cold, and inanimate, and she, too cannot move from shelf. Her world is a sterile and static one. "Blue Mountain" represents Amanda's illusions about the gentle, beautiful life she led as a girl. It is her retreat, the only source of charm and beauty in an otherwise isolated life. It represents her inability to cope with the established norms of society Laura is identified with blue roses in the play. Roses are sweet and symbolize earthly beauty, but at the same time blue roses never exist in the present world is a contradiction in itself. The Unicorn, which is a mythological creature, plays a symbolic role by depicting the isolation in the life of Laura. Like the blue colored roses, the unicorn does not exist in the real world. The unicorn is a symbol of Laura's fragile life. Because he is unique, he has enjoyed a special place among the animals in Laura's glass menagerie, when his horn is broken, Laura is not upset. She is temporarily sheltered by Jim, and her calmness symbolizes her attempt to put aside her world of fantasy for the real one. When she finds out that Jim, her gentleman caller is already engaged. She gives him the unicorn for a souvenir. This symbolizes her retreat into her indifferent and abnormal life.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE FAMILY:

A particular young man may condemn certain aspects of his family and refuse or fail to identify with that culture and in the process may feel isolated from the mainstream of the affairs of the family, but at the same time he may show his profound regard for certain values of his society. Popular culture is one thing, fundamental values other.

Disenchantment with one does not necessarily imply disenchantment with the other, when an individual considers his family and tries to withdraw, he is alienated no doubt from the prevalent culture sick or demands absolute conformity of all, but he is at vantage point. He is at a vantage point because he takes upon himself the full responsibility of his self-inflicted alienation. He is not sick, nor does he consider himself sick or guilty. He is search of new frontiers, in a position to transcend his milieu. But invariably, the characters in Williams' plays are victims of their own society. They themselves are guilty and degraded. So their stern indictments of the moral lapses of their society do not have earnestness and urgency that expected from the genuine does not have earnestness and urgency that are expected from the genuine rebels. Their protests fall invariably flat because they are also alienated from themselves. They lack inner direction and conviction; hence of their revolt against the banality prevalent in the society rather it is the outcome of their guilt and their inability to adjust. Their antagonism is not directed against the cultural patterns also against the fundamental values of their tradition and culture. To those who are crippled by their own inconsistency and vulnerability, basic institutions like family serve as crutches.

The modern individuals while hungering for protection, understanding, guidance and love, are not willing to yield to the family norms and patterns. They consider that places like clubs can be a substitute for home. It is not possible to establish a lasting and meaningful rapport with strangers. Sometimes they do not also try to establish one because intimacy demands restriction of independence, because love means belonging to another in a responsible way. They want to be understood without trying to understand others; want to be loved without loving others; they want the protection of the family without loving others; they want the protection of the family without surrendering their selfish particularly, and these are the basic contradictions in their attitude.

Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* deserted his family in the hope of realizing his dreams; Blanche Dubois is the worst sufferer of a family collapse; he comes out of Belle Reve, confronts a brutish, violent and hostile society, goes deep down in her self-esteem and others' esteem, and ends up in an asylum; Brick polite in the play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* turns alcoholic to forget the oppressive air of a family infested by "mendacity" Alma in summer and smoke, unable to strike up a significant relationship with her parents and her lover John, desperately goes in for strangers in a brothel. All these characters are both causes and effects of broken families, though the playwright implicitly informs us that they are only victims of circumstances.

The *Glass Menagerie* Laura Winfield is isolated so is her mother, Amanda Winfield. The factors responsible for the withdrawal of Laura into a themselves her own world of glass animals are her shyness, her being a cripple, the gap between her attitude and her mother's, her lack of hope, indifference, her acceptance of her condition, and the absence of a character who would release her from the bonds of isolation. These factors integrate at various levels and close the possibility of her release. Chances of rehabilitation seem to be low in the life of Laura since nobody comes to marry her. The scheme of the play lacks a character, which may illuminate the dark world of isolation of Laura, and grant her a new sheltered and happy life. Although Jim appears to be a groom, and she gets momentary relief from her withdrawn and secluded world, soon she plunges back into frustration when Jim discloses to her about his engagement. Jim, the only gentleman caller, comes in her knife, but he too is engaged and isolation remains in her life as it was before. The play is of tragic dimension. The dramatist reveals that isolation is the condition of the modern man. The readers or audience feels the impact of isolation in the life of human beings. They feel that in society the trait of isolation is present in everybody.

CONCLUSION

Failure in marriage changed her way of life. Internally she was isolated but externally she was buried in the pain of love and sex. Externally, she was struggling to face the isolation, but internally isolation had won the complete kingdom of her soul. At Stella's house, she received the harsh blow of rape from Stanley. Mitch came in her life and she dreamed of a joyful life but very soon Stanley disclosed all her secrets to him, and he left her.

The problem of "Find protection" is worth noting which caused isolation in the life of Blanche is a typical southern woman. After the suicide of her husband she goes from one place to another in search of protection, until they had strong protection under a prosperous rich man. Blanche, in order to find protection makes intimacies with strangers. But wherever she goes, she does not get protection, and her airs alienate people from her. She finds protection only under isolation. Like *THE GLASS MENAGERIES* this play also gives a message to the readers about the desire consequence of isolation. Blanche, the symbol of the old, dead, and disturbing element wherever she goes. On account of her failure at adjustment, she hands her self up to her isolation, and at last, is led to the asylum.

Williams does not approve of human being living isolated lives. Of course, this state of modern man is the human condition, but his plays, though they vary in themes, point to several causes, among to which the person is isolated. He brings to the mind of his readers, or audience, these causative factors, implying that if they are tackled properly, the isolated ones can be rehabilitated.