

Q.How does Manjula Padmanavan focus on the grim reality of the modern urban society and on the psyche of the middle-class people in "Lights Out" ? Discuss.

Ans: Literature is an important medium for representation of the social aesthetics. It represents the contemporary society, their identity, culture, and history with all its colour. Literature has the capacity to transmit everyday life experiences and has the potential to represent the inner reality of human world. Simultaneously, it raises voice against injustice and sensitizes people about the rampant social evils. Hence, literature is an effective tool for knowing the hues and colours of the human society.

Indian drama in English has closely represented human condition and has brought stage close to life. Plays do not merely describe human experiences but bring forth the inner and the outer reality of human consciousness. The individual's struggle for survival against various forces is one of the important themes of drama and often found in the intense dramatic situations. The psycho-philosophical realism and the social realism emphasize on the real dramatic situation.

Manjula Padmanabhan's play Lights Out, appeared on stage in 1986. It is based on a real incident of gang rape happened in the urban locality of Mumbai. It extends a grim reality of the modern urban society and focuses on the psyche of the middle-class people. More significantly, it is set in an urban socio-cultural patriarchal society where women are always victimized. More disturbing is the reaction of men and their attitude of non-interference even in a serious situation. The paper analyses this reluctant nature of people who do not involve in other's problems and the approach of hiding behind the issues of privacy and non- interference.

Padmanabhan throws light on man-women relationships and the patriarchal power that rule the society. A woman is always seen playing a subservient role to a man. The status of the woman and the plight of her suffering between two influential beings firstly a man, who with his age old dominant power has a control on woman and secondly a woman who turns into an instrument under his authority. 'Light's Out' is a play based on the real incident that has taken place in Santa Cruz , Mumbai in 1982. Padmanabhan exhibits a world in which woman has identity crisis, her every utterance is made silent ; she implores unto man about her troubles and finds no help. The play is set in sixth floor apartment, in Mumbai which belongs to upper middle class married couple Leela and Bhaskar. They have been hearing to sounds of sexual crimes and cries from their neighbouring building. The dramatist explicitly displays the reactions of women and men regarding the sexual assault and an urgent need to look at the growing demand of feminine point of view.

The title of play is significant. 'Lights Out' suggests darkness and darkness may connote ignorance, indifference, fear, violence, lack of vision and lack of hope. However, it is not a mockery of the middle- class people but a typical tendency growing seriously among people especially those who are staying in cities that is called natural morality by Padmanabhan.