

# THE THEME OF MAN- WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN WILLIAM INGE'S PLAYS

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## **ABSTRACT:** -

Literature is in fact the most explicit record of the human spirit. It is a medium through which essence of our living is made paramount by linking it to imaginative experiences. A creative writer must have the perception and analytical mind of a sociologist who provides a record of human life, society and social systems existing at that point of time. Theme of man -woman relationship seems to be of particular interest to Anita Nair. She depicts this theme in her third novel *Mistress*. She concentrates on the predicament of modern woman in a male dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. These days, most marriages appear to be unions of incompatibility than compatibility. Men are apt to be rational and women sentimental and emotional. Their attitudes and interests are different. Naturally, they look at things in different ways and react to situations differently. Not only is the man himself different, but also as often happens, in a society of changing values, family ways, surroundings to which the woman is expected to adjust herself, are entirely different. William Inge's depicts the changing relationship between husband and wife in the society. Husband – wife alienation resulting from lack of communication and temperamental compatibility forms the theme of *Mistress*.

**KEYWORDS:** Human relationships, man-woman relationship and analyses pre-marital, marital, extra-marital relationships and estrangement between husband and wife.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The man-woman relationship theme as brought out in this study reveals that the women in the plays of Inge's desperately indulge in sex, hoping to enter into some sort of compromise and get over their problems of existence, hoping to delay their old age; and the men continue their illicit relationships with them. The women domineer over their men; they are possessive and insatiable mistresses. For all of them life is a hollow existence, and they warrant pity. All of his plays have been occupied with little in a mechanistic society, and with the need for understanding and tolerance and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstances.

Granville Hicks, a survivor of the socio-cultural and political vicissitudes of the thirties, title the retrospective memoir of his intellectual development where we came out, and it is appropriate that I should attempt, at the conclusion of this investigation, to make a similar discovery. There are three attitudes towards life open to the dramatists: he can record it imitatively, he can withdraw from it, or he can seek to change it. Therefore, the artist, and particular the dramatists are forced to involve himself in the world in which he is a part. Art which ignores social questions is a shrinking flower that conspires at his own death by ignoring the soil in which it grows.

In the foregoing pages of this study, it has been clearly brought out that Inge presented life with intense realism. The realism of his plots, characters, and dialogues suggest the kind of dramas with which the playwrights of the early 1920s broke the earlier tradition of sentimentality and melodrama in the theatre. This undeniable realism stems largely from Inge's awareness that there is a great deal of fraud in human behavior. He is quoted as having said:

As a child, I was struck by the fact that the women, there were always protesting, while men persuade. I got the idea that women hated men. I later came to the conclusion that this was an act – that there was the certain artificiality in their attitude. Some woman love so passionately that they are embarrassed about it because it makes them dependent on men.

This statement is basic to an understanding of the man-woman relationships in Inge's plays; and in these relationships in found the key to his fundamental, realism. He strips bare human motivation, and, like Williams, Miller, and Mc Cullers, Inge brings one face to face with the Compromises which man is forced to make in a society which is at best impassive and which may often be actively malevolent.

The freedom of an "unattached and nomadic existence" his stimulated the imagination of William Inge almost from the beginning. His protagonists walk by themselves, lonely misfits in an artificial society, outsiders misunderstood by their contemporaries. They are lonesome, always lonesome. Their loneliness and personal isolation has invariably been one of the major themes in Inge's plays. Another dominant and consistently developed thematic substance in his plays is the loss of communication. There is no even a single

Inge play-fully-length or one-act-in which his characters are able to communicate with each other, except in the most incipient and formal way. Disappointed and frustrated from all the corners, his men and women feel that their loneliness, personal isolation, and loss of communication can be got over through a compromise based on sex, if life is to have any hope for them. None of his plays ends on a note of real optimism; and one come away from these plays not with the feeling that Inge has solved any problems but that he has chosen to end the play right at the beginning of a major problem. This tendency is one of the many sides of Inge's realism. Inge tries to give large significance to rather banal idea as nourished by the men and women in his society that we must learn to get along together-preferably in bed. The man-woman relationship theme which pervades the earlier plays is absent from *Splendor in the Grass* and from *Natural Affection*. Indeed, in the later Play, sex Become a most destructive force. This theme is also absent from a good number of the one-act plays. Even in those one-act plays which are overly concerned with sex-Bus Riley's *Back in Town*, *The Rainy Afternoon*, *The Mall* and *An Incident at The Standish Arms*-there is no suggestion that sex offers any form of redemption.

Inge has been severely criticized for the emphasis upon sex in his plays. It has been remarked, His concern with erotic aspirations of muddled men and women lent itself to a shallow conception of love as the panacea of society,"<sup>2</sup> and to commonplace pathos and naturalism in expression. Joseph would Krutch finds 'phallic worship' in his plays, and he says, "almost in his first appearance we see the hero playing a penny flute, and no reader of Inge needs to be told what that means.....it does not become quite clear whether society is to be saved through better understanding or whether, as Lawrence sometimes seemed to think, all we need is more and better copulation".<sup>3</sup> Again, he has been called "Broadway laureate of sex writing." A great many of his male characters are castrated by conformity, while others are sex-crazy to the point of ineffectuality, or sex-crazy because they are ineffectual; the women are near idiots because they are victims of either callous or over fond young men. However, in the final view we meet that sex somehow gets mixed up with life, love and freedom in the plays of Inge. \_The Physical demands of women get in the way of big ideas which are often brought in like afterthoughts-issues about racial tolerance, about understanding, about ruthlessness of bib business, about isolation, alienation, frustration, and loss of communication, etc. Ass this has been amply discussed and illustrated during the course of the analysis of the individual full-length and one-act plays, in the preceding chapters.

Since, in the plays of William Inge, human relationships achieve harmony only through sexual intercourse, the word the word 'live' has had only one definition, sex.

In play after play he has capitalized on the excitement leading up to the seduction scene, played every possible trick, he could think of, to arouse. The erotic scenes in his plays are often lengthened out of proportion to others, they are raised to such climatic pitch that they obliterate other aspects of theme, character, or dramatic development. If it is true, as often said, that America is as sex obsessed as a medieval monastery, William Inge has indeed, been a very smart businessman.

William Inge has become a name on the American dramatic scene. Even though his plays may fall apart upon analysis, in his best work something of importance remains an insight into character and motivation, an understanding of the lack of communication between people, an awareness of the appalling emptiness and cruelty in the hearts of many well-fed American, and the very difficult position of the little people. The loneliness and isolation of Inge's characters lead them to reach out for whatever human contact they can achieve, and this contact is more often achieved through sex than through real understanding.

The objectivity of Inge's presentation is almost scientific. He permits the characters to make their own explanations, and never directly leads one to make any moral judgments which he, as another has preconceived. He remains a gifted artist, a consummate gentleman, a warm and sensitive creator; and he feels a strong sense of responsibility to his audiences and public.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

William Inge's throws light on different aspects of human relationships and brings out the factors, which are responsible for change in behaviour of man towards man. He feels that men have been successful in suppressing woman for centuries. He does not waver in her version of better world where men and women can live and work together harmoniously, developing a higher level of consciousness by means of a closer sharing of meaningful concepts, meaningful to the conditions that are present and prevailing.

#### **REFERENCE**

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