

# MAXIM GORKY'S PAVEL VLASSOV AS AN IDEAL ROLE MODEL FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE NOVEL MOTHER

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**ABSTRACT:-** While writing his immortal novel "Mother" Maxim Gorky would not have even thought that ultimately entire novel would revolve around the personality of Pavel Vlassov. Gorky's "Mother" is a novel depicting the revolution against bourgeois society. Pavel has proved himself as an ideal role model for socialist revolutionaries in the novel of Mother. Through the role of Pavel Maxim Gorky has shown his dream and philosophy as Pavel is a character who portrays the spirit of revolution not only of Russia rather of the entire world.

Pavel is also called the positive hero of Maxim Gorky as he is born into an oppressed working class family whose father was a drunkard. His mother is pious and submissive. Pavel makes his journey of life from negativity to positivity. In the beginning he follows the path of his father but later he succeeds in making himself as a role model of the revolutionaries.

**KEYWORDS:-** Bourgeois society, Socialist revolutionaries, Positive hero, Negativity to positivity.

## **INTRODUCTION:-**

Death of his father is a turning point for Pavel who is only a teenage boy, joins the factory and there he learns the collective power of the proletariat. Pavel learns that the working class people may play the role of real agent of change in society. This idea develops a study circles and book-reading sessions in the house of Vlassov. In the house of Vlassov like-minded, socialist workers started taking part. The studious, caring and politically aware person of Pavel and his friends puzzles the protagonist, i.e. Nilovna, as unlike the other young persons of the settlement; nobody is a drunkard or has ill habits of squabbling and bickering.

There is a burning question into the mind of the readers why has Gorky centered his novel on Mother whereas Pavel also deserves to be the hero as he is a well read

young factory worker who besides being an intellectual, is also a man of action. Wouldn't it be more exciting had Pavel been the protagonist of this working-class novel? Idea for making mother the protagonist might have originated from the fact that Gorky wanted to address the working class of the world. Whose views and emotions Mother, is little literate and immensely oppressed have a solid appeal to the working class society of the world and that is kept out of the bourgeois system of education and is poverty-ridden, oppressed and helpless everywhere.

Pavel represents himself as to be a model for a Russian leader. The stern and loving tendencies are associated with him with the traditional conception of the Tsar. His selfless devotion to the revolutionary cause distinguishes him from the hated authority figures of the Russian state. As a depersonalized positive hero, he serves as a model of both traditional conceptions of authority figures and the new man the Bolsheviks sought to create.

Though the character of Pavel, the circle of workers and peasants is both ideologically sophisticated and practical in its closeness to the reality of working class life. It can be experienced as a reasonably complete blueprint for what Gorky would like Russian society to become. So Gorky's future society is dominated by workers and peasants; he presents a picture of a society which is dominated by the proletariat rather than the exploiting bourgeoisie classes. Pavel Vlassov, Pelagea Nilovna, Andrei Nakhodka and Rybin and other down trodden members are not only heroes but Mother seems to be empty of any representatives of the middle or landowning class.

The owner of the factory shows unknown reaction during a protest where Pavel and the others work, but Gorky does not make any effort whatsoever to develop him as a character, even as a villain. Apart from this

action and police officers appear throughout the narrative, but they are never named or involved in the story. Gorky supports equality inside the community of revolutionaries. He avoids the upper classes from any consideration in develop an implied social model.

Although in the novel Gorky attacks on intellectuals yet there is a strong undercurrent of the value of education in Mother. The revolutionary heroes, while not wealthy, are for the most part well-educated in revolutionary and other literature, and Pavel himself constantly reads books on all sorts of topics. The first meeting with his mother over his revolutionary activity raises a question and Pavel reveals to her,

“I am reading forbidden books. They are forbidden because they tell the truth about us workingmen. They are printed on the sly, in secret, and if they find me with them they’ll put me in jail-in jail because I want to know the truth, do you understand?”... “Why do you do that, Pasha?” she asked. He raised his head and looked at her. “Because I want to know the truth,” he answered calmly and quietly.”<sup>1</sup>

When Pavel accepted socialism and began to bring books to home that were forbidden in the tsarist reign, Palagea was initially worried and suspected her son’s comrades. She was increasingly unable to understand his talks because of unfamiliar words and strange expressions but after some time began to feel that she was no less part of the socialist circle of which her son had gradually become a key figure. Now her son had started realizing the emotions of mother.

Pavel sat in front of his mother and started talking to her with his full heart and honesty. Her heart is filled with a sense of pride for her son, because her son understood the life of his mother. He spoke reality about mother and her sufferings and felt pity for her. Mother realised that usually mothers are not entitled to be pitied. In the beginning she did not understand the actual meaning of the statement of Pavel, but later she experienced that his son’s statement was quite true for her and by and by she started realizing emotions for her son. Her heart became full of love and affection for her son as she felt a specific sensation for his son. She asked her son “Why do you want to do, then?”<sup>2</sup>

Through the discussion between Pavel and his mother Gorky has asserted that the working men must study and then they must teach others. These working class people must learn and they must understand why life is so difficult and hard for them. After feeling the zeal for study into the heart of her son the mother felt happy. It was a sweet experience to herd that the serious and stern eyes of her son are now glowing warmly and something is illuminating new in the eyes of her son. She started smiling but trembling with fear and doubt. “She dangled between two feelings: The first thing was pride in son Pavel who wanted the welfare of all people and felt pity for all.”<sup>3</sup> He always understood the sorrows and difficulties of life; He knew the negative aspect for his youth, because he could not speak fluently, because he determined to fight against the life to which all, including him, were accustomed.

In the novel Pelageya Nilovna is a widow of poor and village factory worker and the novelist has shown the action through her eyes. The son of Nilovna whose name is Pavel is the leader of social democratic circle of workers. In the beginning part of the novel increasing affinity of mother with her son has been shown when the radical group gathers at her house initially, she is fearful, as when one of Pavel’s friends first declares,

“We are socialists.”

When Pelageya listened this, she looked at the girl in silent awe. Mother had listened that socialists had killed the king who was called tsar in Russia. This thing had been in the days of her youth.... Now Pelageya was helpless to understand why her son and his friends preferred to call themselves socialists.

When everyone departed home, she reached to Pavel.

“Are you a socialist, Pasha?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said, as he was standing before mother as strong and as straight as ever. “Why?”

His mother sighed deeply and dropped her eyes.

“Really, Pavel? But they are against the Tsar. They even killed one tsar.”

Pavel crossed the room, rubbing his cheek with his hand.

“We don’t need to do things like that, “he said with a short laugh.

Then he spoke to her for a long time in a grave and quiet voice. As she looked into his face she thought:

“He’ll never do anything wrong. He couldn’t!”<sup>4</sup>

Through a series of such turning points, Nilovna's love for her son and the force of his ideas convinces her to support the revolutionary cause. In the second part of book when Pavel is arrested for leading a May Day demonstration, then mother goes to live with a fellow revolutionary. She plays role to smuggle revolutionary booklets into the factory and to farmers the villages. She becomes a full-fledged member of the radical group. In the end, court tried Pavel and sentenced him to exile in Siberia for his actions. The novel ends with Nilovna when she is bitterly beaten to death by police for her effort to sell copies of her son's defense speech.

Pavel, Pelagueya's son is an another character who deserves to be mentioned and discussed. Who may as well be an anti-thesis of Pelagueya. One may move a step further and even draw parallels between these two characters. Unlike Pelagueya, Pavel is cut out to be a leader and Gorky therefore uses him to lay down the criterion of a good revolutionary leader. Right from the moment Pelagueya notices a change in her son, he becomes very dedicated to the cause and never once waivers. Where Pelagueya is allowed to show human emotions, Pavel has to observe the strictest of discipline however much it hurts him and those around him. As Andreyev observes, "Pavel is a rare man-He is a man of iron."5

For example, Pavel, accepts prison as inevitable and while Pelagueya is praying that the cup of suffering should pass from the hands of her son, the latter nonchalantly declares, "There is nothing bad in what we're doing, and there's not going to be. And yet prison is awaiting us all. You may as well know it."6 Love is an emotion that Pavel has difficulties coming to grips with and at times treats it almost with disdain. As he says, "I want no love, I want no friendship which gets between my feet and holds me back."7 To him, the kind of love that Pelagueya and his beloved Sasha want to shower him with, has no place in his life until the struggle is over. Pavel sees no hope for a normal family as long as the old regime stands. He gives two plausible reasons for this negative opinion. One, revolutionaries spend a lot of time in prison and therefore apart from their families. Second, if they have children, the revolutionaries have to forfeit active struggle in order to fend for them.

#### **CONCLUSION :-**

Pavel Vlasov, the hero in Mother, is the real personification of Gorky's ideas about a positive hero. In the beginning he is portrayed as an ordinary worker. Life compels him to learn certain unpleasant truths. He reads the prohibited revolutionary literature and keeps in touch with the revolutionary intelligentsia. Through the life of Vlasov Gorky shows one of the important stages in the history of the Russian emancipation movement-the unification of spontaneous workers' revolts with socialism and revolutionary Marxism. The heroes in Mother raise the flag of revolutionary scientific socialism.

The novel mainly deals with socialist humanism, the theme being the birth of a new man, the growth of his consciousness and the formation of a new morality. Gorky shows in the novel that the proletarian movement will be successful only if it is connected with the freedom struggle of the masses. The workers felt that they had no other way to happiness, besides the one through which had passed their predecessors. The worker sees in Mother their fate past, present, and future. Reading it they become convinced that they will be successful if they listen to the words of Pavel Vlasov, "Go forward!" All these features make the novel a heroic epopee of the socio-political struggle of the working class for socialism. Pavel tells the jury:

"We are socialists. That means we are against private property, an institution which disintegrates society, sets people against one another. We want to fight and will fight against all the forms of physical and moral slavery enforced on the individual by such a society, against all means of crushing human beings in the interests of selfish greed. We are workers, people by whose labour all things are made, from children's toys to massive machines; yet we are people deprived of the right to defend our human dignity."8

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