

Familial Disintegration in the Family Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar

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Abstract

Mahesh Elkunchwar's The Wada Trilogy, a sequence of three dramas namely, *Wada Chirebandi*, *Magna Talyakathi*, and *Yugant* is a demonstration of the loss of relations, values, traditions, and peace in life. These plays stand for tradition, old customs, traditions, culture, universal human values of love and kindness and the joint family structure of the old times. The author shows disintegrated family relations representing undesirable changes that take place generation-by-generation and replace the old human significances with new commercial self-centered conduct of the characters. *The Wada Trilogy*, essentially a family trilogy has had an interesting history in its writing and reading alike. What had looked like a close and true outline of the decomposition and disintegration of the feudal extended family in *Wada Chirebandi* (translated as *Old Stone Mansion*, 1989), calls for a different reading now.

The present paper is an attempt analyze three plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar comprising *Wada Trilogy* in relation to its thematic concerns in order to discover the effect of modernity on human psychology in general and traditional family structures in particular leading to their disintegration.

Keywords: Wada Trilogy, family, disintegration, values, traditions etc.

The Depiction of Family in Elkunchwar's Plays

Mahesh Elkunchwar, a well-known Marathi writer and one of the finest Indian dramatists is also known for his critical works and theoretical writing. His highness can be perceived by the fact that he has been considered Vijay Tendulkar's successor of. Being an Indian, Mahesh Elkunchwar - like many other Indian writers - shows his concern over changing nature of family in the wake of modernity. Family, in Indian system, forms the base of the society. Unlike Western world, Indian parents make enormous sacrifices for their children and children think that it is their sacred duty to take care of their parents.

One of the major outcomes of modern way of life as represented by Elkunchwar in his *Wada Trilogy* is disintegration of family. Family is not merely a group of people staying in one house, It is value that Indians have been trusting as sacred. Elkunchwar shows that traditional family no more exists. It has been collapsed and is dysfunctional. Although all the member live together, they are isolated. His major thematic concern in *Wada Trilogy* is corruption of feelings, emotions and thoughts leading to loneliness,

disintegration, alienation, struggle, stress, and demolition of age old structure called family.

Familial Disintegration

Disintegration is a term associated to break up or dismembering when something gradually ceases to exist. It is the process of something that becomes weaker and thus, loses its effect. It is like breaking something into small parts or pieces. Familial disintegration means a lack of bonding among the members of the family. Traditional family consisting of grandparents and grandchildren along with uncles and aunties has already been reduced to husband, wife, parents and children. Elkunchwar's concern is not that the structure of the joint family has been disrupted and reduced to wife, parents and children but that the reduced nuclear family too on the verge of demolition.

Family disintegration does not necessarily mean that the husband and the wife part their ways either by entering into a legal contract of separation or by staying away from each other without judicial interference. Rather, it is the situation where conflict disturbs the peace and members cease to think others as their own. When constant quarrels leading to bitterness in the relationships forces the members of family to forget the core values namely, 'sharing and caring', the disintegration takes place.

The Disintegrated Family in *The Wada Trilogy*

The Wada Trilogy is all about a country Vidarbha Brahmin family in Maharashtra. The play, *Old Stone Mansion* is a mirror of some of such joint families where people live under the authority of an elderly person called 'karta' who controls all the affairs of the family. It has been seen that all other members assume secondary role and act under the pressure of unquestionable authority of the head of the family. but they face so many problems. It is a family that holds tension under the pressure of some authority.

The Wada Trilogy is a depiction of a disintegrated family. One by one most of its members lose the old traditional familial bond that unites them and their lives become a desert. Desert plays a significant role in *The Wada Trilogy*. The members of Wada family flee in the darkness of time just like the particles of sand. Elkunchwar depicts social reality with the help a feudal family. It is also an attempt to unveil the patterns of patriarchy. The old and the responsible men of the family are not only orthodox to deny any change in their family structure but also egoistic to disrespect the opinions of any of the other members although they may be really beneficial.

The Disintegration in Thoughts and Relationship

Family remains a family by the bond of love that every member shares with the other. This bond essential to the family ceases to exist in case of Wada family. *Old Stone Mansion*, the first play of *The Wada Trilogy* narrates an incident when all the members of the family gather to attend the funeral of their father, Vyankatesh. Sudhir, the second son, who lives in Mumbai with his wife and son, arrives five days later.

The sorrowful occasion like death of the father, generally, unite the brothers but here the siblings end up with fighting. The reasons of their quarrel like - paying for the

post-funeral rites, share of the left over property - show that modernity has made men money minded. They think of everything in terms of economy. Relationships do not matter much to them. No one seems to be willing to pay for the funeral rites. The eldest daughter-in-law of the family, Vahini, unhesitatingly tells them that he was everybody's father and it is everybody's responsibility to pay for his funeral rites and that they are not the only people responsible for keeping the honour of Deshpande family. The changed nature of the eldest daughter-in-law of the family is evident in Prabha's words:

I must live on whatever crumbs you brothers throw at me now. You've all the rights. You'll take your share and go off to Bombay. But let me tell you Sudhir, it's not even five days since Tatyaji died. Five days And Vahini has changed already. The house keys moved instantly into her keep. And Aai went instantly into the shadows of the back room. When Tatyaji was alive, you couldn't hear Vahini's footfall on the veranda. But within five days her orders are heard way outside the Wada. (Elkunchwar 87)

Aai, the mother, is a witness to all the backbiting that goes on in the house about who would take charge of the post-funeral expenses of her husband. A ceasefire is reached when Aai decides to sell her share of Wada to manage the expenses. She says that she knows everything that's going on in the Wada. she feels sad by saying that things were different when her husband was alive. She can see the old Wada disintegrating and with it would fall down an entire system of relationships and an entire culture of living together in a community.

Indian readers can directly relate to such kinds of situations. Wada is not the only family that shows the nature modern world. These things have become common in Indian families in the wake of modernity. The death of the father expose the nature of sons and daughters-in law when they show keen interest in grabbing the ancestral property but are reluctant to take the responsibilities.

The whole Wada family believes in outward show and pomposity. This family is also representative of the typical Indian sensibility where families are more concerned about their reputation in the society than the reality and the problems they face. They have grown hypocritical. In the second scene of *Old Stone Mansion*, Vahini says, "The Deshpandes decided to be modern and put a tractor there. Forget about usefulness as long as we can make a show of wealth". At the opening of second play, *The Pond*, which is the sequel of *The Old Stone Mansion*, the Wada is dead and disintegrated.

Effect of Family Disintegration

As the result of disintegration of relations, thoughts, emotions and bond of blood everything gets shattered. Wada culture no more remains a family. It loses its bond and things begin to fall apart leading to complex issues. Parag joins underworld and gets evolved in an affair, worried Abhay's settles down abroad; Nandini, though a suffering wife, keeps firm assertion of her independence; Prabha, the sister, loses her life pathetically; Chadu, like a homeless person, breaths his last breath in a dried pond; Ranju

runs away with her tutor along with all the gold of the family; Aai, undergoes mental disorientation; Deshpande family loses everything.

In the second part, the family comes together again for a couple of weddings. Abhay, Sudhir's son, wants to visit their village but his father wants to keep him away from the Wada. As the result, he not only goes away from Wada family but also from his parents. He leaves for the U.S instead of settling down with his parents in Mumbai and Parag is left to struggle in the village.

The family neither share any strong bond nor its members wish to meet one Their gatherings on the special occasions like funerals and weddings become a symbols of disintegrated relations. Thus, a traditional Hindu Brahmin family loses all its values of love and care and gets disintegrated into their separate worlds putting an end to Wada in particular and to the traditional family values in general.

Conclusion

Loss of values and that of peace in life can be noticed in *The Wada Trilogy*. In these plays Wada or the Mansion stands for tradition, old culture, universal human values of love and goodwill and the joint family structure of the old times. With the loss of meaning of human values, Deshpande family members lose the peace in their life. They are merely left to watch the ashes of their past and now they are just scarecrows without life in them. The crumbling state of the old stone mansion symbolizes the collapse of the old traditional ethics and values and the break between custom and modernity. Elkunchwar has shown the mirror to the society full of selfishness.

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