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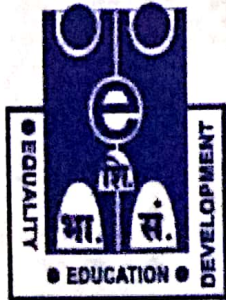
# Education and Society

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# Social Realism in Mahesh Elkunchwar's Old Stone Mansion

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## Abstract:

An honest attempt is being made in this research paper to examine deep into the issue of social realism in Mahesh Elkunchwar's play *The Old Stone Mansion* (1989). In this research paper, the researcher focuses on such characters that reveal deep-rooted Indian customs, traditions, and culture. The play depicts the feudal order, which was observed in the village culture, and its consequent use on the middle-class families in the village. The present research paper highlights how Industrialization changed the social structure of rural India and people were running towards the cities for jobs and business. The research paper also deals with the false pride and hypocrisy of social status.

**Keywords:** Realism, Urbanisation, Industrialisation, Tradition, Culture, Family

## Introduction:

Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Old Stone Mansion* is a translation, made by Shanta Gokhale of his original Marathi drama *Wada Chirebandi* (1987). This play shows various sides of rural feudal culture and the decaying of rich families in villages because of urbanization. There is a conflict between urban and rural cultures too. The play criticises different social aspects even though it resembles family drama. Elkunchwar while speaking at the Natya Shodh Sansthan says: "Wada is not a simple family drama; it is more than that's a document of social change, political change."

## Social documentation:

The play is social documentation of middle-class family's of 1990 where many social problems had become critical because of industrialization, and its consequences like urbanization and the migration of many families to the cities. In the present play, Sudhir, and Anjali a husband and wife represent urban civilized culture, whereas Bhaskar Vahini, Aai, and all family members in 'Wada' reveal a rich village culture. Wada again depicts the social, economic, and political change in village life.

## Characters and their symbolic Representation:

All characters and 'Wada' itself play a significant role in portraying the social picture of the time. There are many symbols in the play like the tractor, ornaments, antique pieces and Mansion which depict social and economic realism in the drama. The play is a completely realistic one, all characters, events, incidents, places, and descriptions denote it. The character of Dadi even though not a major character, deepens the sorrows and made the atmosphere more serious in the play. Her character gives sight to people even though she is blind herself. One can understand from her that old age is so much pathetic. The old person has to depend upon somebody. Past glory, vigour and dignity never succeed in old age. A person in old age becomes helpless. It is a bitter social reality. Aai the wife of

Vyankatesh becomes a helpless and sympathetic figure immediately after the death of her husband. Through this character, the play wright gives a message to the reader's and the audience that the Indian women's social existence vanishes after the death of her husband and her existence depends on other male family members. It does not mean she is free after her husband's death. The woman is marginalized not only by her husband but also, she is marginalized by social, political, and economic factors. But at least she has social respect when her husband is alive. A woman loses her social position and respect after the death of her husband. Bhaskar and Vahini represents a typical husband and wife in a rural area. Both must face many social problems with their family matters in village life. In a village, all customs, traditions, and ritual practices must be done even if it is outdated for the people living in a city like Mumbai. Both Bhaskar and Vahini must face patiently, the declined status of the family more than Sudhir and Anjali. Sudhir and Anjali are living in Mumbai with polished manners but their lifestyle is not sophisticated. They too have to struggle to survive in a metro city with living in a rental house. A person, who is supposed to be rich and sophisticated in a village, has to live like a common person in Mumbai. This harsh social reality is presented in the play.

#### **Family conflict:**

Family conflicts just after the death of the head of the family signify the deep-rooted psychological suppression in the minds of the leading characters in the play. All characters in the play must face different social problems. They struggle for their existence. They fight for their rights in the property. There is again a fight between modern and traditional cultures. Aai, Bhaskar and Vahini stick with tradition whereas Sudhir, Anjali, Abhay and Ranju represent a modern style of living. Chandu and Prabha are sympathetic figures in the play. No one cares for their marriage, elder brothers Bhaskar and Sudhir are so much busy with their family. After their father's death, both Prabha and Chandu become helpless. They should have equal rights on the property but they are deprived of their rights and neglected in the household. No one cares for Chandu and Prabha's career and marriages. Elkunchwar opens this touching reality and selfish attitude of people in a middle-class family. Only a father and mother can give equal treatment to their children, no one can replace them. All brothers are engaged in their own businesses and they care only for their own children. Anjali and Sudhir taking care of Abhay and Bhaskar and Vahini care for Parag and Ranju. Other family members are neglected. So the question remains of their existence not only in the family but also in society.

#### **Marginalization of Women:**

The play focuses on the marginalization of women. All women characters in the play are suppressed under male domination and even imprisoned by social bondages and tradition. Tatyaji is a symbolic character of patriarchal domination. He is again a typical example of a caricature of feudal order in village life. Women in Wada culture were suppressed economically, psychologically, and socially. They could not take part in discussions of family and social matters. They always remain behind the curtain and within the walls of the mansion. Their voices and emotions suffocated under a strong stone mansion.

#### **Hypocrisy:**

The hypocrisy of tradition and customs are bitterly criticized by the playwright. After the death of Tatyaji, there is a ritual rite on the thirteenth day. This Hindu tradition becomes meaningless and hopeless in this modern age. Sudhir opposes the extra vagant expenditure on this rite. He tries to say to Bhaskar and the other family member's about the uselessness and foolishness of this tradition. Here the conflict is not only between Sudhir and Bhaskar but also between modernism/civilization versus tradition and barbarism. Wrong social practices have been examined in this play. Social pride in feudalism is declined. The economic status is also destroyed but Tatyaji and even Bhaskar wants to maintain family pride in the society which is hypocritical.

Social realities like farmers' poor conditions and problems of job holders in Mumbai are depicted in the play. In a village, farmers do hard work on the farm but they have to face many problems, like an irregular monsoon which results in water shortage to farms, labour problems, lack of capital, no fixed rate for agricultural products, loot and exploitation by merchants. Farmers for the sake of the family's upbringing and even to maintain social prestige must borrow a loan from private money lenders with high interest which destroys the families. In the present play, money is not taken on interest but family members are willing to put Wada on the mortgage for Tatyaji's thirteenth ritual rite. This is very critical social reality on which Elkunchwar focused, in the 1987s. Today this is a burning social issue in Vidarbha and Marathwada.

#### **Conclusion:**

Therefore, in this paper, I tried to show how Mahesh Elkunchwar in his play, Wada Chirebandi reveals false social customs and traditions, which destroy the family and how social status depends upon economic status. When someone's economic and political status goes off, then social status and position start to decline. The play is full of social realities which highlight different social problems, difficulties, and the strong intermingling of family relationships with socio-cultural aspects. Mahesh Elkunchwar tries to withdraw these social bondages and ideologies sowed in society in the name of religion and culture. The play shows the social reality and gives the readers and audience practical wisdom to avoid mistakes made by ancestors and lead realistic life.

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