



The Wheels of Life in Preeti Shenoy's *A Hundred Little Flames*

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Abstract

India has a variety of cultures which are more common in south India. India's culture collectively refers to the thousands of unique and distinct cultures of all the religious and communities present in India. The language, religion, dance, music, architecture, food and customs of India vary from one place to another within the country. Indian culture has often described as a fusion of several cultures. Preeti Shenoy's "A Hundred Little Flames" revolves around relationship between father and a son across two generations. Ayan unravels mysteries surroundings in the life of his grandfather Gopal Shanker. Ayan, the protagonist of the novel, does not have any wish on his own. He feels like puppet in his father's hand. Ayan left his job due to an unfortunate incident in his office party. His father sent him to village to take care of his grandfather. During his stay at Poongavanam, Ayan find out the sad truth about his grandfather's past life Ayan determined to bring back his grandfather's lost love. The novel "A Hundred Little Flames" explores the lives of the people who forget to look during after their parents in their old age. They were busy running for the material treasure leaving behind their soulful treasure. Author cleverly wheels out the plot and reveals how the society succumbs itself blindly with so called modernism leaving behind their traditional inheritance and humanistic values.

Keywords: culture, relationship, family, friendship and elder abuse.

This article aims at the life of an old man, Gopal, whose hundred flames his desire are doused off by his progenies. The crushed and crumpled soul of Gopal longs for a hold. The generation gap exists between his kids and him bring in multiple disruptions in his life. This paper also investigates the generation gap that prevails among the main characters Gopal, Jairaj, Shaila and Ayan. And it will also enlightens us on a good path and brightens our lives like hundred little flames.

Preeti Shenoy was born in 1971 in India. She is an Indian writer, author and novelist. She is in the big league. She started her writing career with 34 Bubble gums and candies 2008 which received good response from readers. Her writing style is loved by thousands of peoples. Her books also gained a lot of popularity among readers. The novel A Hundred Little Flames begins with in Ayan, the protagonist of the novel, does not have any wish on his own. He was worked in MNC Company in Pune. Due to an unfortunate incident in his office party, he left his job. Though he is an obliging son, he is enforced to execute certain wishes of his father which he dislikes to the core. Ayan's father sends him to village to take



care of his grandfather. During his stay at Thekke Madom in Kerala has changed his perspectives about life. He agrees with his grandfather in many of his opinion. He is able to identify passion and genuineness of his grandfather's platonic love that exists between his grandfather and his ex-beloved. He realises the value of rustic life which is not tarnished by technology. The serene and eco-friendly life is juxtaposition of urban life. Altogether Ayan relieves himself from the monotony of mundane world. He sets his aim to revive his grandfather's dream.

Ayan's grandfather is not a pure modern. For instance his affinity towards his soil which has not felt the transformation or influence of technology is very strong. But when his grandson depends on technology he remains quiet and does not interrupt in his ways. Ayan's grandfather is very nostalgic. He refuses to accept transformation. He adheres to metanarratives. Post moderns do not adhere to grand narratives. "...there is a tone of lament, pessimism and despair about the world which finds its appropriate representation in these "fractured" art forms..." (Watt, 81). This is evident in the life of Ayan. Everything is lost for Ayan at one juncture. His life becomes fragmented desperate in his love and career. He is hopeful to pursue his life with confidence. He does not carry over his dejection after his failures. He adapts to the new environment in Thekke Madom. Besides he maintains good rapport with his grandfather. Ayan is his grandfather's ardent aide. Gopal denies staying with his son who lives abroad. Thekke Madom is a palatial ancestral home of Gopal Sankar and his siblings lived together in a joint family. "Little by little, the joint family had disintegrated with members moving away to different cities to make a living." (A Hundred 19). Gopal's son Jairaj plans to sell their ancestral home and asks his father to stay with him in Bahrain. Gopal contends his son's plan saying: "People like to live in match boxes, where there is not even a piece of land" (P,20) Gopal is for "minimalism". He has grudges towards his son who prioritizes monetary development and socio-economic status. His son and daughter never value their source the place in which they spent their childhood days and brought up.

Gopal finds a pot of gold in the form of his grandson who is able to sympathise him unlike his son. Ayan realizes his grandfather's affinity towards his place. Ayan's father defends his plan on the ground that "who is going to live in that huge house after him?" (P 81). His father's words "fall like a stab to Ayan" (P 81). What Jairaj is unable to cope with is realized by Ayan. He immediately thinks of his grandfather's plight once the home is sold. Ayan knows that his father is very practical. Simultaneously he is able to sense that selling Thekke Madom is equal to that of uprooting his grandfather from a place to which he affixes to the core. Ayan's sadness is profound. This incident highlights that age is not a barrier for generation gap. What a son fails to understand is understood by a grandson. In Indian context, though it is primarily a patriarchal set up in the society, father and son relationship does not exist smoothly in majority of the cases. Most of them wheels with one another. In the case of Gopal, his son and daughter fail to realize him. It is a common expectation of a parent to see his progenies occasionally.



Gopal's children are against his expectation. Both of them stay away from him. They never care to visit him. Phone calls and Skype connect them and that too for their material benefit in the view of Gopal. Gopal, who is stuck by traditional codes and conduct says: Yes. Jairaj hasn't come here for thirteen years or may be more. I have stopped counting. He hasn't the title or heads unless they are unavoidable. He hasn't come here even after Akshu was born. The family tradition is to give a thulabaram at the devi kshetram. (P 102) Gopal feels a lot toward his children's negligence. He too keeps himself away from his children and never expects anything from them. He leads an isolated life until the arrival of Ayan. The ego clash between the father and the daughter touches their raw nerve and kindles their fury. Gopal's friendship with his schoolmate Rohini leads to a wide gap between his family members and himself.

Gopal is not given a chance to defend or justify the purity of his friendship with Rohini. Before he tries to sort out the issues his friend Rohini vanishes from his life mysteriously. It is Ayan who brings back Rohini and revives their friendship. Gopal's wife, Padmaja meets her end badly out of depression. Shaila strongly believes that it is father who has deserted her mother and killed her. Gopal gets through all his trouble all alone. Lack of mutual understanding and humanitarian concern among family member's leads to mishap. Jairaj cares his father yet he fails to understand his emotions and feelings. He never respects his father's individual expectation in his old age. According to Jairaj, nothing is essential for his father. This misconception pushes him to take a dreadful decision of admitting his father in an asylum. Again Ayan becomes Gopal's redeemer. Ayan distances himself from his father and does his best to reunite Rohini and Gopal.

There is an unexpected twist in the end of the story. Gopal who meets with numerous ups and downs in his family life has been very determinate while facing oddities. On the contrary when he is about to meet Rohini after many decades unable to bear the jubilation, gives up his enthusiasm feels ache when he is at the reach of Rohini. He breathes his last in the place in Pondicherry where they have met numerous times. His departure proves that man's abiding assures him peace while he lives and when he dies. Intra personal relationship among family members irrespective of age is essential in order to maintain a healthy and peaceful relationship.

Ego should be shirked off by all individuals in the family. Empathizing elders is very important to avoid them making feel that they are marginalized from the rest of the family members. Jairaj's rash decision in the novel widens cleavage between him and his son. Ayan becomes too rigid toward his father and plans to transform "Thekke Madom" to an art gallery with the help of Rohini by getting support from the Kerala government. Ayan felt like a subservient to his father and fears him initially but now turns to be a determinate as well as independent individual saying:having the courage to stand up to my father and tell him to fuck off. All my life I was afraid of him. Now the only person I answer to, is myself. (P 360).

Every individual should realize one's responsibility to maintain a strong relationship which is devoid of expectation. In order to patch up with the different generations



irrespective of age differences individuals should shirk off their selfishness. Each one creates one's own trends and sticks to them badly because they want their comfort zone to be undisturbed by any external agent. Emanation of self-realization to create oneness among the family members to bridge the gaping gap is the solution to cover up the frictions that exist among the postmodern individuals.

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