

B.A. SEM. II
General English

The Doll's House
By
Katherine Mansfield
From:- Tales of Life

Submitted To:

Associate Prof. Mrs. Mamta
(Head of the English Department)
H.M.V Jalandhar.

Submitted by:

Poonam Laroyia
Assistant Professor in English
H.M.V Jalandhar.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

“The Doll’s house” is a short story which reveals the cruelty of adults, their prejudice about the poor sections of the society. Moreover, they also infect the young innocent minds with class prejudice by forbidding them to have any kind of interaction with the children belonging to the economically weaker sections of the society.

Class prejudice is deeply rooted in the society. The story highlights the problem of social consciousness, the story introduces two families; the Burnells and the Kelveys the wealthy Burnell sisters receive a doll’s house from Mrs. Hay, who had come to stay with them.

They are very excited about the doll's house they decide to shoul it off to their school friends. Two of the Burnell children are greatly attracted to the red carpet the red chairs and the gold frames of the richly decorated house. However, Kezia, the youngest of the girls, takes interest in rather simple lamp.

The doll's house becomes the hot potato: The girls of her class nearly fight to be Isabel's, the eldest girl of Burnells family, friend. The doll's house becomes the cynosure (a thing of great admiration) of all eyes. The only two who stay outside the ring were the little kelveys, the deprived ones. They were in poor economic condition and parental background.

Class consciousness is practiced by even by teachers as one of their teachers, has a special voice for the Kelveys and a special smile for the other children.

Kezia is highly influenced by a simple “real” lamp while the other girls are influenced by its gaudy decorations that adorn the house.

Kezia takes, “the lamp’s best of all” – The lamp here symbolizes the working class. Lamps are the sacrificial lights in the alter of the wealthy capitalists. These working classes sell their labour power and are responsible for creating the wealth of a society but ironically are treated with contempt and disdain by the society lamp, which represents something “real” has a value in an otherwise desolate world.

The doll's house symbolizes the upper class Burnells. Kezia's attempt in opening the gate to Lil and Else may be taken as Kezia's kindness and human warmth that defies the inhumane tyranny of the class distinction.

Although Kelvey sisters are treated like animals and shooed out of the Burnell's house, Else appears to be unaffected with this cruel treatment at the hands of aunt Beryl. Else's statement "I seen the little lamp" signifies something real is redeemed.

The doll's house highlights the society that is highly obsessed with materialistic possessions in contrast to the deprived ones. The rich are respected not because they are morally high and refined but because they appear better. It is their focus on appearance that the children make fun of the conspicuous dressing sense of the Kelveys. The truth is they are dressed in “bits” given to them by the people whom their mother works. The Kelveys becomes the object of scorn and laughter for being the daughter of a washer woman and a goalbird.

The doll's house focuses on the characters relationships, as exercised and constructed in terms of affective actions” both related to negative feelings like coldness, indifference arragance violence and cruelty and these related to positive feelings like gentleness, sharing, tolerance, sensibility. The lamp in the story is decisive for the house's liveliness that Kezia complaints with Isabel, her elder sister, every time she describes the house without valuing the lamp. The value attributed to the lamp constitutes a relevant difference in terms of values and affective responses from the children.

REFERENCES:-

1. sittingbee.com