

**Jaya: Embodiment of Humanism in Harvest by Manjula Padmanabhan****Mr.Avinash V. Thote****Assistant Professor, Department of English,  
Shankarlal Khandelwal Arts, Science and Commerce College, Akola.****Abstract:**

Manjula Padmanabhan is a playwright with high dramatic caliber. The play *Harvest* is a futuristic satire written in 1997. It is a dark fantasy about a high-tech racket in body organs. Its setting is located in Mumbai, as if the story happens in 2010. Act I opens with the waiting of Om Prakash who is about to come after the job hunting. The action of the play revolves around two groups of people the donors and the recipients of organs transplant. The play shows how poverty can compel a man to go to any extent to earn his livelihood. Jaya, aged 19 is the only strong character in the play. It is in the final scene of the play that Jaya evolves into the towering figure. Though organ transplantation is the main theme of the play, it also deals with delicate interpersonal relationships between a man and a woman revealing the inherent tensions and violence in human relationships.

Indian English Literature takes its turn and adventure to expose the various social themes since the last decade of twentieth century. While dealing with variety of contemporary issues, even woman writers also contributed their attention to the scenario.

In the contemporary world, women writers get attracted to the prominent genre of literature, i.e. drama. Urban abusive society is the target they use to explore thoroughly to get rid of its clutches and for the quest of their freedom. Many of these writers achieve worldwide fame. Dina Mehta, P. Sengupta, Mahasewta Devi, Uma Parameswaran and others are prominent figures. Among them, I feel pleasure to mention Manjula Padmanabhan. She is considered as great and remarkable dramatic figure that demand special attention. She even contributes to the field of Art and Fiction.

Manjula Padmanabhan is a playwright with high dramatic caliber. After passing out from Bombay University, she began writing in the publishing and media industry. Apart from writing newspaper columns she also created comic strips such as Suki, an Indian female comic character. The play *Harvest* is a futuristic satire written in 1997. She has got the most worthy Onassis award for this play. She has worked as a playwright, cartoonist, journalist, novelist and a children's book author. She has also written the plays entitled *Lights Out!* (1984), *Hidden Fires* (2003), *The Artist's Model* (1995) and *Sextet* (1996). *Escape* (2008) is her first novel for adults and is one of the few works of modern Indian science fiction.

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1997) is a unique play. It is a dark fantasy about a high-tech racket in body organs. The play highlights a futuristic satire on the trade in live organs from the Third World to the West. The play *Harvest* (1997) examines "the trade in human organs and the commoditisation of the third world body where trade is predicated upon. The play shows an unemployed man selling the rights of his body parts to a buyer in the United States, This is the commoditisation of the healthy third-world body." Therefore in the third world there has been significant advances in transplant medicine, has now become a bank of spare parts for ailing bodies in the first world.

The play *Harvest* contains political and social arrangements. Its setting is located in Mumbai, as if the story happens in 2010.

Om Prakash, aged 25, a young man who suffers from poverty and joblessness, willing to sell the rights of his body parts to a buyer from the Western world.



Act I opens with the waiting of Om Prakash who is about to come after the job hunting. Ma and Jaya are on the stage. Apart from the usual retorting and differences between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, one notes their concern for Om's getting job. Though the ever-growing use of electronic devices like computer has turned Om jobless, his sixty-year-old mother seems to be addicted to another electronic domestic device-television. She appears to be less concerned about her son and daughter-in-law and enjoys her comfort zone in Celluloid. Ma retorts her daughter-in-law Jaya when the latter asks to leave her alone. "Ma. Alone, alone! Have you seen your neighbours? Ten in that room; twenty in other! And harmonious as a TV show! But you? An empty room would be too crowded for you." (Harvest, 218) Now, here initiates the commanding influence of the machines in human life. We come across this situation as Om narrates, "We were standing all together in that line. And . . . Sometimes there was no place and he'd have to move on before he finished still dripping . . . ." (Harvest 219)

The action of the play revolves around two groups of people the donors and the recipients of organs transplant. The play shows how poverty can compel a man to go to any extent to earn his livelihood. In order to earn money, Om signs up to Interplanta Pvt Ltd, the organ selling company. He has no job but is married to Jaya, may be in her late teens.

Jaya, aged 19 is the only strong character in the play. She is "passionate and spirited." (Harvest 2) Being dissatisfied with her marital life, she seeks distraction with Jeetu. She is aware of her sexual urges and finds fulfillment with him. Her sincere love towards Jeetu obliges her to take his care in his ailment. Again, she is the only one to object and worries when Jeetu is taken away instead of Om. It is in the final scene of the play that Jaya evolves into the towering figure. When Virgil appears before her as an illusion created by the contact module, in Jeetu's body, Jaya realizes that Jeetu's body has been used by Virgil to prolong his life. When Virgil observes Jaya, he says her, "We're interested in women where I live, Zhaya (sic). Childbearing women." (Harvest 95) His country has lost the art of having children and is now in the process of getting bodies from poorer countries to populate it. He tries to seduce her with his erotic words and promise of sensual pleasures to make her e-pregnant. However, though she wants to attain motherhood, she is not ready to get it by sacrificing her womanhood. She demands that if he needs her, he come to her in person. Virgil denies as her world would be a health threat for him. She insists that she will not deal with a phantom any longer. Finally, she blackmails him by threatening him with suicide. The play ends with Jaya setting the terms and conditions. She will take pills for staying awake. If he does not come when she runs out of them, she will kill herself. ". . . I'll die knowing that you, who live only to win, will have lost to a poor, weak and helpless woman. And I'll get more pleasure out of that first moment of death than I've had in my entire life so far!" (Harvest 102) She fights for her rights as a woman and as a human being.

Though organ transplantation is the main theme of the play, it also deals with delicate interpersonal relationships between a man and a woman revealing the inherent tensions and violence in human relationships. In places like, the opening scene shows a conversation between Jaya and Ma which depicts a normal familial conversation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law with usual complaints and chidings to each other but the scene is full of warm familial relationship. Jaya is the only person to survive the power play between the First World and Third World countries. While her husband and brother-in-law give up the fight soon and her mother-in-law succumbs to the material charms offered, Jaya alone maintains her identity and established her right to be thought of as a human being. She was the only one bold enough to ask questions during the contact module and the food supply. She strongly annoys on the throwing of her kitchen utensils.

Thus, the only character of the play who has suffered a lot in the alteration of relationship in family is Jaya as she drifts between Om and Jeetu. But she never gets the dignity and title of true wife. She is not able to reverse the imposed relationship of brother-sister with her husband, she retorts to Om:



JAYA: I'm still your wife.

OM: On paper, you're my sister. In reality, you're worse than nothing to me. If not for Ginni I'd throw you out onto the streets. To be hunted. What do I care? You betrayed me. Slept with my brother.

JAYA: You never . . . wanted me –

OM: Wanting – not wanting – what meaning do these words have?  
(Harvest238)

But on realizing the nature of despairing act he has been involved to, he turns into a pathetic subject and his repentance and lamentation for escape from the hopeless situation is heartrending:

OM: How could I have done this to myself? What sort of fool am I? . . . Whoever opens that door is my murderer, my assassin – . . . No!! I beg of you – please! Please! Leave that cursed door alone! . . . (sinks to the floor) I'll hide in the fridge. I'll just crawl along here, all the way to the fridge and I'll sit there, yes –. (Harvest 234)

Having lost all relationships within the family because of this materialistic pursuit and consumer culture, he seeks to begin a fresh relationship with new perspective after discarding the detrimental neo-capitalist attitude of developed countries.

Being a social critic, Manjula Padmanabhan portrays the realism in new perspective social changes and Harvest is one of the steps ahead than all of her other plays. It is not only an assessment of social reality but also goes beyond the boundaries of nation to delve with the relationship of human beings from different countries.

On the one hand, this play depicts the crumbling of societal and familial relationship due to the increasing consumption of consumer products and endless materialistic pursuits of human beings; on the other hand, it also projects the operative of developed countries in the developing countries to propagate the notion of consumerism for mercenary purposes. Though the play is full of desolate images of humanity but at the end it shows a ray of hope with a hint to start every relationship again.

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