

CHAPTER - IV

I. WOMEN CHARACTERS

Lillian Hellman is called the playwright of second sex. As a women, she knows women better. In her eight original plays, we see many female characters. While creating these female characters, she uses some devices, one of them is, she ~~creates~~ stereotypes and reuses them and while repeating them, she makes experiments. In some early plays, women depend upon someone but later on they are improved and they become independant characters. Afterwards these characters are changed from ordinary women to extra ordinary women. In her last play woman is totally changed. While creating them she combines two approaches, external and internal.

She ~~creates~~ women of various age, or we can say, she covers every phase of human life while creating her women characters and makes them perfectly universal. There are little girls, young women, middle aged women, and old women. In The Children's Hour and Watch on the Rhine, there are, little girls, lovable as well as vicious. Peggy Rogers, Evelyn Munn, Helen Burton, Lois Fisher, Catherine, Rosalie Wells, and Babette Muller, ~~these~~^{are} ordinary and amiable girls, but Mary is the exception. She is a villianous girl of fourteen years old. Hellman creates these characters with a special touch. She knows child psychology and uses it while creating these characters. These girls are curious, frightened, straightforward and perfectly childlike. In the beginning of The Children's Hour, she has grouped these girls and they are different from each other. In the stage direction of the play, we can see Hellman's skill of characterization e.g.,

'Seven girls, from twelve to fourteen years old, are informally grouped on chairs and sofa. Six of them are sewing with no great amount of industry on pieces of white material. One of the others, Evelyn Munn, is seating nervously, in front of her; she has Rosalie's head bent back at an awkward angle and is enjoying herself.

The eighth girl, ~~peggy~~ Rogers, is sitting in a higher chair than the others. She is reading aloud from a book. She is bored and she reads in a singsong, tired voice¹ etc..

Evelyn lisps while talking, Mary ~~speaks~~ shrewdly, etc. In this way, Hellman creates girls with fine strokes. She uses different skills and makes the characters real and lively.

Hellman ~~creates~~ young women. It seems that she is fond of this phase of womanhood. Because most of the characters, in various plays, are young women. They are belonging to two categories; good and evil. There are simple straightforward women, and there are cunning, shrewd, & selfish women. Women of third phase are middle aged women and ~~old~~ women. Most of them are grandmothers or mother-in-laws. These old women characters are the honoured persons of the families they are kind, determined, and lovable. The important thing is that, they are not villains.

Hellman uses the technique of discrimination. She places good by the side of evil and makes her characters effective. Mary is placed against the mob of the girls, who are ordinary and innocent girls, which makes Mary more vicious. Regina and Birdie are utter contrasts. Birdie and Sinee Laurette are placed in the same manner.

Emily Hazen and Cas Bowman are contrasted, that way they are rivals. Anna and Carrie, in Toys in the Attic, are the outcome of the same technique. In The Autumn Garden, Carrie Ellis and Mrs. Ellis are contrasted. In other words Hellman creates criteria to judge the evil, by creating good characters. Good and evil, active and passive, young and old are discriminated in the plays.

These women characters are representatives of Hellman's female imagination. She ~~creates~~ stereotypes, e.g., ~~an~~ evil woman character is created in the first play and it is repeated in the following plays. But Mary's viciousness is different from Regina's cruelty. That way Mary is childlike because, she wants to escape from the accusation, and so, she escapes from the situation by living, but Regina knows that she wants and hurts Horace on purpose, actually, she kills him by not providing help. Carrie's viciousness is totally different from these two characters'. There are weak women characters, who are always dependent on other characters. Birdie is a weak character and behaves according to Oscar's wish but Lavinia is different from Birdie. Birdie has no other world but Lavinia goes away from the foxes. So, this internal confinement changes into an external freedom.

Hellman uses autobiographical material in the characterization. She uses some real life figures and incidents from her childhood. She wants to see herself and her past in her women characters. She declares that her characters are the outcome of her own experiences. She says that she just sees some people, some of them she knows. Some of these characters are from her own

family. Her Pentimento and An Unfinished Woman reveal her use of autobiographical element in the characterisation.

While creating Mary, she reminds her childhood and the incidents from her childhood. Once she twisted her friend's hand and on the same day faked pseudo heart ache. Her attachment with her friend is described in Julia section of Pentimento. All these things are described through the characters of Mary and Martha. While creating Alexandra, she says, she has meant to half mock her own youthful high class innocence in Alexandra. The character of Lavinia is modelled on Hellman's mother. She wants to show that Lavinia is the only bearer of good blood.

The Little Foxes is based on her mother's family she writes two dramas about these maternal relatives. In an early draft of the play two sisters were the innkeepers, who were modeled on her two aunts Hannah and Jenny. The characters in Toys in the Attic are clearly patterned after her father and his two maiden sisters. These two aunts of Hellman, Jenny and Hannah, are discussed in Pentimento.

In Lily's character, she sees reflection of her mother. Mrs. Prine's , relationship with the chauffeur is like her aunt, Lily.

Hellman says that while describing characters, somewhere there comes the author and so, we notice autobiographical element in the plays. She goes back to her childhood or family or the places where she lived, visited the persons whom she met. This element,

in the plays, creates the effect of reality. The characters become real and life figures.

Some women characters are foolish. Their foolishness does not make us laugh, on the contrary, we pity them. Lily Mortar is one of such women characters. She reminds her past and recties glorious memories of stage, she always refers Sir Henry Irving. She comments on the toilet backstage in Rochester. Always, while speaking, with Martha, her tone becomes over-emotional. Birdie is a silly but pathetic woman. She represents a class that is not affected by the Civil War. Her Wagner sign and her talk makes her foolish, at the same time she becomes a pathetic woman. Rose Griggs, in The Autumn Garden, is a foolish woman. She can not take decision by her own. Always she ~~is~~ dependes upon others. Lily is foolish in the same manner. Her references to a knife and her moving in underwears, shows her foolishness. All these fools are passive characters. Their foolishness does not creat any comedy, in the play.

Lillian Hellman is called the dramalist of Second Sex. Patraka Vivian Mary quotes Lillian Hellman as :

"Interested in women and sensitive in depicting them, the prominent American playwright Lillian Hellman, has always included major female characters in her dramas. She uses their confrontations with both male characters and other female characters to provide the play with energy and emotive power, she places women's values and personalities in opposition to those of other women in order

to convey her central themes. Thus Hellman's use of female characters is important part of her content ..."²

Women in her plays are very important for the plot development, subject and theme. The women, in the plays, are created to give the idea of feminism. Their actions are determined by Hellman but their motive becomes universal. These female characters are actual and they are well drawn. Sometimes, these characters are intricate and are not easy to realise immediately.

Hellman uses devices of language and actions, while creating women characters. As a woman, she knows feminine qualities. Of course, she is very conscious about women characters. Stage directions is ~~another~~ useful device, through these directions, the portrayals have made more perfect. For example She introduces Mary in following manner,

"... the door opens for enough to let Mary Tilford, clutching a slightly faded bunch of wild flower, squeeze cautiously in. She is fourteen, neither pretty nor ugly. She is an undistinguished-looking girl."³

Minuteness in depiction is very effective, which makes characters realistic, she develops these characters through other characters' conversation. We see variety in her women characters some of them are intelligent and some are foolish, there are adulteresses and they are purely moralistic, simple and straightforward women. At the same time there are cunning and shrewd women. Some are money-minded and some of them yearn for love. She does not lack in the characterization of women.

Patricia Meyer Spacks says,

"The life of constant action (in this case "masculine" rather than "feminine" accomplishment) rests on a foundation of intense self-concentration. Lillian Hellman's work has been to make a self, rejecting in the process many traditional concomitants of femininity.."⁴

Hellman's women characters are different in traditional sense. Hellman is an admirer of Ibsen and Chekhov. We notice a great influence of these writers in her plays. Her heroines, or rather, main characters, are not confined in a typical frame. They break it and become free women. As traditional audience are used to see male-dominated women, here, in Hellman's plays, they have astonishing roles. They are independent and sometimes they dominate men. In that sense, she is a modernist.

Major women characters, in Hellman's plays, have different roles. Karen and Martha are social dependents. They can't revolt against injustice, and they undergo the decision given by the society. Their lives are depended upon the people living in the society. Joe Cardin leaves Karen but she can't stop them. Such characters do not have their own mind and decision. Always they face their doom because of their inability.

Julie of Days to Come is a social rebel. She is an immoral character. She goes on changing her lovers and, in the end, faces self - deception. There is no other way to her. She admits herself to the fate. From the beginning, she goes after a false dream, without any reason. When she has everything, she feels she has nothing and becomes unhappy. She represents social rebels, who

goes against the norm of the society, and because they do not have any moral value they are defeated.

Emily Hazen represents a confused woman in the society. She ~~does not~~ know what should be done exactly. She knows everything and ~~she, also,~~ knows the result but can't stop things from happening she bears the truth for many years. She only accuses Cas. Such characters are inactive, we can not hope much transformation in them. They go on living their lives without rebelling against it. She can't leave Alex and remains there, accepting her life with the man who has deceived her.

Lavinia is the victim of the male dominated society. She has to obey Marcus and afterwards her son, Ben. These women are ~~dependend~~ on men. They do not have their own firm way of thinking. She ~~beggs~~ Marcus to listen her, but Marcus is not ready to listen what she says. She waits for a year but can not force the things on Marcus. Her freedom does not show her success, on the other ~~land,~~ it represents her male domination, only the dominant is changed. Previously, Marcus dominates her and afterwards Ben dominates her. First he wants the information and then he allows his mother to go away.

Regina, represents greedy women. She is after money she reminds us of Lady Macbeth. Such characters have their own dreams and they are ~~chessing~~ the dreams. For them, there is no difference in morality and immorlity, in good and evil. They are ready to do anything for their dreams. Regina becomes so devilish that we

never have thought of it. Such characters are on the wrong path, which they suppose right. Such characters represent the people affected by industrialisation. Regina is so practical that she does not understand the meaning of the relations. She kills her husband by not providing help and blackmails her brothers. Regina is called the vixen among the little Foxes.

Fanny Farrelly of Watch on the Rhine is an old woman. She is helpful, she knows the bad effects of the war and she is ready to help Kurt. When Kurt kills Teck, she does not feel anything wrong in it. On the other hand, she is ready to protect him financially. The woman, represents rich aristocratic women of the contemporary society, who love past and admire glory of the past. Fanny represents keepers of society's standards and protecters of its morality.

Sophie is totally different from these women characters. She is portrayed like traditional heroines, shy, beautiful and soft-spoken. But she does not accept male domination. On the contrary, she dominates vicious male and becomes free woman. The change is very interesting as well as astonishing. It focuses upon Hellman's art of characterization.

We find constant experimentation with the women characters. These women characters are transformed from shy, dependent and passive women to intricate, independent, & active women. Miss. Hellman never lacks while creating women characters. They are perfect life figures

without the overtones of fiction. The important thing is that, they are not queens and rich women belonging to royal origin. They are very ordinary and common women, whom we meet in our day-to-day life. Women servants in the plays, play very important roles. They are kind and attached with the respective families. And, they represent so-called good people and they represent protectors of moral supporters.

Male Characters :-

While creating women characters, Hellman does not neglect male characters. At the same time male characters are vivid and life figures. These male characters are not of traditional sort. We notice some common things in her female characters and male characters. One of them is, these male characters belong to the middle class. They are not heroes, kings and knights. They are supporting characters. Their role is to proceed the plot further. Many a time, these male characters are passive and dull. Another common thing in the characterization is that they belong to almost every phase of manhood. There are little boys, young men and old persons. Hellman is not concerned with only one phase.

Josuha Muller, and Bodo Muller are two little boys, who are mature and very adjustable. These boys are polite, mannerful and soft spoken. They love and admire their father, Kurt calls them 'prejudiced critics'. Josuha is intelligent and he is aware of the situation. He is very conscious about how to talk, & at the same time he tells Bodo, how to be decent.

There are young men as well as old ones, often they are grandfathers. Almost all young men are passive characters. They are bystanders or just viewers. Without commenting and interfering, the scene, they remain there. Ben is, that way, active male character. He wants to dominate everyone. In Another Part of the Forest, he dominates every character but, later on, In The Little Foxes, his authority is overwhelmed by Regina, so, the same victorious Ben, becomes passive character in The Little Foxes. Joe Cardin, Alexander Hazen, Mr. Griggs, Ned Crossman are the supporters. They are helping characters. Nick tends to be an active person but his superiority is challenged by Sophie and he submits himself to Sophie's wish.

As she has used autobiographical element in the characterization of women, likewise, she uses the material for male characterization. The Hubbards are the characters based on her mother's family. They are Southern characters and they are businessmen who left Alabama to go North as they were after money.

The character of Julian in Toys in the Attic is clearly patterned after her father. Her father was cheated by his partner and he failed in the shoe business. Hellman's uncle Willy was, like Julian, happier, Her Kurt Muller is like her girlhood friend, who was killed by Nazis. Her Kurt Muller is created on the people of Spanish Civil War, whom she had seen. These people were ready to give up their lives on what they believed.

She uses autobiographical material to make her characters real, so, she chooses some persons she met or the incidents occurred in her life.

Though, these male characters are the minor characters, she makes them essential. Kurt Muller is the only protagonist, among them. His acts are firm and he acts with decision. He is the real hero of the play and he is the only one heroic figure among Hellman's male characters. Kurt Muller is a moralist, he has decided his aim and never forgets it. All the time he behaves with determination. The character is the most appealing one. If we compare the character with other male characters then we come to know the importance of the character. While reading Kurt's character reader is satisfied with him. Hellman has modeled the character on the traditional standards. He fulfils the requirements of the play and becomes an unforgettable characters because of his heroic qualities.

We admire Whalen, in Days to come, because of his determination but he doesnot become the hero of the play. He is faded character. His speech and firmness is admirable but he can't reach that level which Kurt has reached. He cannot be admirable like Kurt because he loves mill-owner's wife, the act is immoral and because of this his goodness is not remarkable.

Most of the male characters are villains or vicious people. They are not moral characters. We always remember these characters for their viciousness. Ben, Marcus, Oscar, Teck, and Nick are

unforgettable characters. Ben represents tribal superiority. He overthrows his father and becomes the chief of the family. He represents cunningness of industrialised modern man. Marcus' history is not pleasant. Everyone knows how he has become rich person and so no one respects such person. Even, his children do not like him. Their relationship has the limitation of money. Their thinking starts with money and ends with money.

Teck is vicious person and he is a blackmailer. Apparently, he looks decent but actually he is selfish and behaves with his senses, but in the end he is not successful in his motive. All these vicious characters are defeated afterwards. All of them are active characters and create problems for other characters and make the plays lively. Their actions reach to the climax and later on they become pale characters.

Some of the male characters are mere onlookers and there is no action at all. Moses Hazen, Ned Crossman, etc., are the bystanders. Their passiveness is irritating. Not only readers but other characters of the play become unhappy because of their passiveness.

Hellman uses the technique of discrimination, while creating them. Oscar and Ben are discriminated and they have made impressive. In Another Part of the Forest, Ben and Marcus, and Ben and Oscar are contrasted. Three of them are vicious characters and there is a sort of race between them. They want to occupy the superior position of the family and everyone of them try to

pull down the other. As Hellman uses Regina-Birdie pair, and gives stress on morality, here, while depicting male characters she does creat that sort of discrimination. In Toys in the Attic, there is only one male character and it is developed fully. Nick and Crossman in The Autumn Garden, are contrasted with each other. One is an honest lover and the other is a flirt. Constance is waiting for Nick for many years and remains unaware of Crossman's love for her. When she realizes it, there is too late. Sam is contrasted with Moses and Alex. Sam is an active person whereas remaining two are passive. Sam hates them for their inability. In Days to Come, there is discrimination in the master and servant. Watch on the Rhine gives us two more important male characters, one is the hero and the other is the antihero of the play. One is admirable and the other is hateful. Hellman uses this device to make her characters more powerful and more effective.

Almost all relations, she considers in her male character. There is a father, a brother, an uncle, a son, etc. While creating them Hellman repeats brother-sister relationship. The Little Foxes, Another Part of the Forest, and Toys in the Attic are three plays based on brother-sister relationship. The peculiar thing is that, these brothers are immoral characters, Always they are in need of money and, therefore, they are attached with their sisters. Only a few things are different in them. In The Little Foxes, they plot against their sister and her husband, in Another Part of the Forest, brothers are dependent on their father. Later on one of them becomes superior of the family and the other submits himself to the elder's

wish. In Toys in the Attic, the brother is wholly dependent on her sisters, financially. The common thing is that, these characters are selfish, they do not brood about the losses caused by their behaviour. Whatever they do, they feel it right. Ben destroys the lives of other characters. In The Little Foxes, things are against him. Julian, does not consider his sisters, on the contrary, he goes on demanding money from his sisters. Because of him, the sisters can not go for tour. The money which they have collected for their trip is demanded by their brother to recoupe his business losses. All the three brothers are dependent on their sisters. There is jealousy among them. Julian becomes nervous in the presence of his sister, and so he chooses Lily as his life-partner who is not grown up, mentally. Either these brothers do not marry or if they marry then their wives are weak characters.

Male characters are revealed through the conversation. The speech of the characters become the important device. Andrew Rodman speaks in defeated way, Oscar and Ben are satirical. Ben's speeches in Another part of the Forest give clear idea of her character. When he knows the past of Marcus, he says -

Ben: To buy the pass that saved you from a hanging. you bought them from - ... From a captain E. McMullen. Now I'd figure it this way: by the grace of Captain McMullen you got sixteen free years. So if they swing you tonight, tell yourself sixteen years is a long time, and lynching is as good a way to die as any other.

Marcus: (In a different voice) Walk yourself down to the sheriff's office now. I'll catch up with you. If you're fool enough to believe some invention of your mother's, understand that nobody else will believe it. The whole town knows your mother's been crazy for years, and Dr. Seckles will testify to it-

Ben: Let's put it this way : they think Mama is an eccentric, and that you made her that way. And they know Seckles is a drunken crook. They know Mama is a good woman, they respect her. They 'll take her word because, as she told me a little while ago, people believe that they want to believe.¹

Moses in The Searching wind is always ironic in his speech. His speeches are full of irony and makes the dull play, somewhat, different from its monotonous flow. Nick's speeches give the clear idea of his character. He speaks cunningly with everyone. And makes everyone know themselves better. Every character has its own peculiarity. Even though they are stereotypes they are different from each other in their behaviour.

These male characters have different roles. They are not placed in traditional frame. These characters are not rebellious. Some of them like living without interfering in their own lives as well as in others. We can make their distinction as active characters, and bystanders. Most of the active characters are vicious persons. And others are mere onlookers. According to some critics they are unaffected these characters are catalysts. They do harm to other

people but themselves remain unaffected. Nick is one of them. Hellman uses the device of age-spectrum. Always two generations are placed together, e.g., Moses and Sam, Sam and Alex, Marcus and Ben. Oscar and Leo, etc.. We enjoy the dialogues between them. Hellman's imagination does not lack anywhere whether it is minor or major, male or female characters, she creates these characters with determination.