

SHARON POLLOCK: The psychological angles in her works**Prof.Ashu Bhardwaj(profashu@gmail.com)****Professor-Soft Skills VIT- Campus Jaipur**

ABSTRACT : Sharon Pollock is one of the most renowned playwrights of Canada who has experimented with several new techniques of dramatization. Besides being didactic in her works , she has been extra careful in invoking a live discussion in the minds of her readers and audience about any issue.

The psychological angles are the dimensions through which she has dissected the minds and the emotional conditions of her characters. Her works provide the enough evidence that the personality of a character depends on the situation, heredity and the experiences faced by her in life.

My Paper deals with the psychological outcomes of an individual due to the surroundings and experiences faced by her or him. The heredity, the emotional experiences, the people in contact and the situations or circumstances faced by a human being decided the personality of a character.

Happy experiences lead to the happy individual while the struggling experiences shape the individual to a pessimist or sad human being who always find a fight in her life. The circumstances and situations further strengthened her mentality. Sharon Pollock writes on the famous cases of social scene. She has successfully picked and developed the historical cases of *Walsh, Blood Relations Doc* etc in her writings.

The outcome of the characters' personality forces us to believe the fact that they remain the victim of circumstances. The posed situations remained the

main reasons of their particular behavior under particular situation. **Lizzie Bordon** , a famous character from *Blood Relations* is inspired from a real incident of twin –murder in actual life. Sharon Pollock has been successful in getting sympathy for her main character from the audience despite two murders. The situations and circumstances experienced by Lizzie leads further to make the audience understand that the personality of a character is the outcome and result of Circumstances, Heridity and Experiences faced by him. The behavioral patterns are decided and the mal-function of behavior are caused by some faults experienced by the individuals

Key Terms:

Sharon Pollock, Psychological dimensions, Heridity, Blood Relations, Lizzie Emotions ,Circumstances ,Personality Behavior Behavioral Patterns.

Sharon Pollock is a Canadian playwright, an artistic director, a bold producer with a message in her works. She had been one of the boldest playwrights who took the psychological, social and even some historic issues with such courage and integrity. She studied understood the details of all her works before sketching the lines and putting life to their characters. Her characters seemed to be natural victim of the circumstances. This is the reason that she got the huge applause from her readers and audience as the sympathy and catharsis created during the presentation of plots were well absorbed by them.

The Canadian drama struggled for achieving, legitimizing and universalizing its own identity in 60s and 70s but things started falling to the mainstream and Canada started getting its recognition in 80s and 90s saw the economic issues with the greater political and artistic impact, making the Canadian theatre 'survive' more than 'thrive'.

However the boom of mega-musical contributed to the renewed vigor, confidence and inner variety and more importantly 'pluralism' of Canadian theatre. The contribution of Sharon Pollock's works in the form of playwright, actor, director and producer has helped in providing new heights to the Canadian theatres; each season has seen the growing success of her plays.

She has also written six plays for children, several television and radio scripts, and award-winning dramas. She received the 1980 Nellie ACRA award for best radio drama (*Sweet Land of Liberty*); the 1981 Golden Sheaf award for the television film *The Person's Case*; and the 1982 Governor General's award for *Blood Relations*, about Lizzie Borden, the acquitted axe murderer. In Theatre Calgary's 1981 production of the play, Pollock played the role of Miss Lizzie. Her next plays - *Walsh* (1974), *The Komagata Maru Incident* (1978) and *One Tiger to a Hill* (1981) - which have been produced in every major theatre centre in Canada, earned her a reputation as a playwright of conscience. *Generations* (1981), *Blood Relations* and *Doc* (1984, Governor General's Award) are less concerned with

social issues and more with domestic conflict. *Doc* is loosely based on Pollock's own family background; like her other plays, it is brutally honest, and painfully telling. Her play *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, a prison drama, was shortlisted for (but did not win) the 1987 Governor General's Awards, and in January 1988 she was awarded the Canada-Australia Literary Prize. Pollock returned to Calgary in 1988, which remains her home base. She founded the Garry theatre in Calgary (1992-97) to produce populist plays for the community. Her play, *Saucy Jack*, which considers the story of 'Jack the Ripper' from a woman's point of view, was opened at the Garry Theatre in Calgary under her direction in 1993. *Death in the Family* also opened at the Garry Theatre in 1993 (Dir. Rick McNairy), with Pollock playing the part of Renee Harvard.

Her contribution to the Canadian Cinema and theatre is immense and varied and has fetched accolades for good quality works also with a specific message in each work. She was not Didactic but she composed the literature with a purpose for the society and environment. She tried to showcase the issues and problems in a very smooth and natural way, well crafted and apt with the script.

Sharon Pollock's writing is very much helpful to the psychologists also to understand the reasons of some mal-behaviors in the individuals. Sharon Pollock's writing is intelligent, provocative, and innovative, and she continues to experiment

with structure, to explore controversial issues, and to care passionately about the Canadian theatre.

We the human beings display different behavioral patterns, when experience different environments. Different nature and behavior are observed when they grow in separate and different surrounding. “The nature of two twins get absolutely different when one grows in urban and other develop in rural area”

Personality is a product of basically heredity and environment and the interplay of both. It's not that a single factor controls the behavioral pattern or personality types but several other factors too affect the development of personality. The nature of two twins get absolutely different when one grows in urban and other develop in rural area, although the twins develop through one same cell only but if the product grows in different environment, the different personality is resulted depending upon the experienced conditions, environment and upbringing.

The important variables responsible for the various behavioral patterns

Heredity environment and the interplay of two variables. Experiences and the different people involved during the upbringing of a child also contribute to the thinking pattern, behavioral pattern and type of responses one gets from the surrounding.

Sharon Pollock who was herself a battered wife and did not have a healthy childhood, was harboring certain hidden feelings and emotions in her heart. The life of Sharon was devoid of happy and satisfying experiences. Through Lizzie Bordon, her protagonist in *Blood Relations* she got the opportunity to mirror all the frustrations and complains with the surrounding.

Lizze, the main character in *Blood Relations* is depicted as a passionate Victorian spinster who was longing for love in her life. She had lost her mother and she hated her step-mother, 'don't forget everyone hates a wicked step-mother' a character who was repressed, unemployable and alone in the world who did not have the security of family in her life. The chain of actions move in a way that she finally kills her father with an axe very brutally with forty whacks and after realizing what she had done, she gave forty one whacks to her step-mother too. For Lizzie the axe became a love object, to Lizzie which symbolized to the freedom from her troubles. The culture in America again reflected power, patriarchy, sexuality and love in the surroundings which brought the unrest, dissatisfaction, rebellion and boredom in the society. People lacked the mutual respect and trust in each other's relationships. The presence of all these issues have affected the characterization in the scripts of theatre plays and the true picture which was present in the society ruled the theatres too, and the play like *Blood Relations* were super success. Lizzie Bordon is the mouthpiece of Sharon to express the agony,

frustration and all fantasies of killing her own husband. The circumstances that she faced in her life which were not supportive and made her to rebel against her husband were created in the play *Blood Relations* where the intensity of the frustrations and pain had lead to the killing of the parents by Lizzie. The behavioral patterns develop due to the experienced surrounding, people in contact and the created circumstances around the characters. The outcome of the actions seems very justifying with the depicted reasons around the characters as happened in *Blood Relations* that the audience fail to hate the characters for such barbaric actions even.

The story of *Doc* also revolves around a very famous doctor Eve who dedicated his whole life for the community service, but completely ignored his home, his wife and her lovely estranged daughter Catherine. The circumstances lead to the death of her frustrated wife who drank herself to death. The loneliness and want of love were among the main causes. It is a memory play when the daughter comes back to the town on the eve of ceremonious honoring her physician father and the revival of the past takes place when the father and daughter unleashes a kaleidoscope of memories. The trouble with authority or the troubled relationships have been one of the significant themes of Sharon Pollock's works. The troubled relationships lead the murder of parents in *Blood Relations* by Lizzie while the conflict in the relationships in *Doc* lead to the death of the

doctor's wife and the separation of the daughter. The degree of intensity of emotions had different impacts in *Doc* and *Blood Relations*. The circumstances play a contributive role in deciding the behavioral patterns of human beings, also the psychological aspects regulates the intensity of the degree of actions. The suicide of Doctors' mother, the over-workaholic nature of father and the death of mother due to alcoholism lead to the development of an insecure daughter who suffered from the conflicted relationships. Catherine is depicted as an abandoned child who was neglected by her narcissistic parents, again a victim of circumstances.

Walsh and Fair Liberty's Call shifts the experiments of Sharon Pollock towards the official and professional grounds. *Walsh* is a drama about the disillusionment of a man who was betrayed by the government mode of actions. Sharon Pollock came under the national attention due to this drama as it raised the issue of Sitting Bull, chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux, and James A. Walsh, Superintendent of the NWMP, two officials of great dignity and honor. The drama was considered prominent due to its passionate presentation of the racial and cultural division in the country. The sequence of events was fresh and was capable to arouse the troubling thoughts about Canada's treatment of aboriginal people and about its relations with the United States. Walsh the main character was forced to realize the ugly reality. He was forced to admit that he was serving a government that based

its Indian policies on recommendations from the field only and he realized that he was a simple puppet and the Sioux are the Pawns and there is no sense carrying out the task further. The circumstances forces him to take a tough decision and he feels the helplessness, agony and pain which further intensifies his pathos. Circumstances control the behavioral patterns of human being, it's just not the heredity or the environment but the interplay of both which plays a crucial role in deciding the typical shades of nature and temperament. Through *Fair Liberty's Call* the exploration of family tensions and professional conflicts are intermixed and presented in a very subtle way. The play centers on the Roberts family during the Revolutionary war. It depicts how the father of the family keeps shifting his loyalties to the English Crown and the rebels depending upon the offered gains and benefits. The eldest son of the family fights with the loyalist and when he dies in the battlefield his younger sister takes his place attired in the form of a man. The process of regendering and taking new responsibility brings new challenges to Emily. Sharon Pollock has finely presented how the female characters fight against the oppressive forces or restrictions to gain her own identity.

Thus to sum up the study and the observations derived from the Sharon Pollock's plays, the characters of her plays provide a great source for studying the psychoanalytical angles through various dimensions and its proved that the behavioral patterns of the human beings are dependent on heredity and

environment both. The interplay of both the factors immensely impacts the nature and temperament of individuals. The actions, behavior or the nature of human beings, which forms the personality of a human being largely dependent on the experienced situations, circumstances and surrounding individuals. Individuals are the victim of the circumstances and experiences, if they can be regulated, the actions and resultant reactions can also be altered or controlled up to a certain degree.

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