



## Theme of Social Status in Mahesh Elkunchwar's 'Party'

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Mahesh Elkunchwar is one of the eminent playwrights in Indian drama. He is a professor of English. He lives in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. His themes are wide ranging - gender issues, women's issues, violence, patriarchy, poverty, hypocrisy etc. He has written more than twenty plays in Marathi. Most of his plays have been translated into several languages like Hindi, English, French, German etc. The play 'Party' represents Mahesh Elkunchwar's transition from naturalistic drama to more experimental and introspective forms in his later works. The play takes place over the course of one evening at a cocktail party hosted by Damayanri Rane. She is a patron of Arts. She is an influential socialite in Mumbai. She gathers a group of prominent people from the city's cultural elite - writers, critics, actors, bureaucrats, and others. As the night unfolds, polite conversation gives way to deeper revelations about each character's personal hypocrisies, ambitions, and moral failures. The importance of the play continues in modern contexts where intellectual posturing often replaces genuine engagement with societal issues.

**Keywords :** Mask, Hypocrisy, Urban, Social Interaction, Gender Issues

### INTRODUCTION :

The play Party revolves around the theme of social status and the creation of Art. Damayanti Rane organizes a Party for an established writer Mr Barve. Mr Barve has won a prestigious literary award. The Party is only for the people from the inner circle. It shows that there are certain circles in the society which defines proximity among the characters as per their social status. Social hierarchy is considered important. The Party is attended not only by the invitees but also by people having double standard who love attending parties. Malvika says that she loves parties. She represents people who are not happy with the success of others. These people still want to attend parties to remain in limelight. Mahesh Elkunchwar highlights such Party lovers through their dialogues. It is a matter of social status to be in such parties. The character of Malvika is juxtaposed with Damayanti Rane. Damayanti is a forty five year old lady who maintains a low profile. She is from rich and influential family. It highlights the importance

of social status. The more influential a person is the more successful he becomes. Influence relates to powerful position in society. Damayanti's father is a very influential person. He is a cabinet minister. His powerful position can fetch success for writers, artists, journalists etc. People flock around these influential persons to fulfill their own targets. They show fake affection.

Damayanti says that Barve's award money is going to be used for the cause of charity. Social interaction becomes selfish in this context. The characters in this Party are related to social fame. They are Barve, Agashe and Bharat. They are writers. Other characters include Mohini, Vrinda Jogdand and Amrut. Mohini is a one time actress. Vrinda is a social politician. Jogdand is a journalist. Amrut is a creative writer. He is now a social worker. They are all related to society in a different way. Mahesh Elkunchwar introduces other characters who are different from the earlier mentioned people. They are Malvika, Narendra, Doctor and Sona.

The superiority complex reflects through most of the characters in the play. Each one assumes the other as inferior. Each wants to enjoy superiority. The characters who are related to society have to put up mask before interacting with society. The double standard in their personalities is highlighted very intensely through various incidences. Most of the characters are materialistic. The character of Amrut, on the other hand, seems to be conscious of the principles of life. However, he never appears on the stage. It is like Godot in 'Waiting for Godot' who never appears on stage. His absence and discussions about him make his character live and significant. It is the human tendency to run after thought beyond access. In this play, the characters of Amrut is beyond access. He prefers to work for social cause away from the limelight. The play juxtaposed the materialistic characters and down to earth characters beautifully. It shows the reality of society.

Bharat is a twenty four year old writer. He is favoured by Damayanti. He has two options. He can choose to live like Mr Barve and get social recognition. The play was written in 1981. Its theme is highly relevant in modern times. People of modern times aspire to become famous. They try to grab fame by whatever way they could. They prefer to use the social media to show off trivial things and to become famous overnight. Bharat is from a low class family. He is termed as over ambitious. It is the classification of society based in their castes which decide the extent of ambition of individuals. Bharat is the representative of common people. He is not acknowledged by the established writers despite his mature and intellectual writing style. They do not want Bharat to elevate himself. This is because they do not want to lose their position as supreme leader of society. Bharat refuses the State Government Award. However, nobody is ready to believe him. He is never comfortable in the company of the established writers.

This discrimination highlights the simplistic mind set up and attitude of the complex upper class people who boast of modernity. They fail to adapt to modern thoughts of equality. Mr Barve is forty five years

old. He received many awards. He enjoys the glamour. His hard earned honor and money make him a genuine character. He is well aware of the moral obligations. He distributes his prize among the poor. He is a person with social awareness.

Damayanti is a fan of his literature. Mohini is living with him for the last five to six years without matrimony. These facts put light in the live in relationship on which they are involved. Such a relationship is not acceptable from the social perspective. Mohini does it for her love. The playwright depicts the sexual aspect through the dialogues. Mohini says to Mr Bharve that she wants him. The concept of possessiveness and recognition in society outfits the decency of social behaviour. Mr Bharve represents the male ego He thinks that Mohini cannot prove to be a good actress. She has avoided accepting the challenge in her career by hiding behind him.

Mr Bharve looks like a generous person in social life. However , in personal life he practises egoism. He does not fulfill Mohini's wish. Mohini remains unsatisfied. She becomes alcoholic to forget her grief. Consumption of liquor is considered a high class fashion. However , it is a bad habit and injurious to health. It is prohibited in traditional Indian culture. Mr Bharve pretends great love for Mohini when they are in public. However , he remains aloof from her in private life. The dramatist deals with the institution of marriage in the play. Mohini has not been able to enjoy life. The play raises a question about the importance of marriage for human happiness.

Damayanti is from a high class rich family. She admires artistic creations by others. However, she is unable to create anything by herself. Sona calls her a parasite. She lives on the art of other artists. She wants to make a show of her father's wealth and influence. She throws parties to fulfill her aim. The play deals with the theme of alienation. It is one of the most discussed theme in modern literature. Mahesh Elkunchwar points out that the aim of people's search even when they are surrounded by a crowd. She is also inspired by the idea of being great and famous. She is of the view that it would have been better if Amrut had completed his project instead of going to the tribal area to work for the tribal people. Damayanti is of the view that the path of realism accepted by Amrut is not a romantic path. Her measures of success are different from those of Amrut. She is interested in making a show off. She is not interested in doing any good work for the needy. She glamorizes the generosity of Mr Bharve who gives the prize money to the poor. She says that Mr Bharve has a strong sense of moral obligation. Damayanti uses weighty words. Mahesh Elkunchwar juxtaposed the discrepancy between the social and private life of the people who enjoy glamour. Damayanti also faces a very difficult and miserable married life. Her views on marriage is noteworthy. She is of the view that marriage is a compromise. She is a fan of literature of Mr Barve. She admires art and culture.

## CONCLUSION :

The play depicts the superficiality of the pseudo intellectuals who indulge in lofty talk about revolution , justice , and art. They do little to bring real change. Amrut is the moral centre of the play. He is never on the stage. His decision to abandon fame and live among the oppressed contrasts sharply with others who remain in their comfort zones. The characters are portrayed as emotionally bankrupt. They are detached from the sufferings of common people. The play criticises their self serving attitudes. As the party progresses , masks slip and the darker realities of each character gets exposed. The play remains a landmark in Indian theatre.

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