

Chapter - 21 Broken Images

Thinking About The Play

Question 1.

How genuine is the love that Manjula expresses for her sister?

Answer:

Malini, Manjula's sister, suffered from meningomyelocele which reduced her existence to misery. However, Manjula had nursed her sister throughout as she says, "I am childless and she became my child! Truly the book is about her. I have dedicated it to her memory." The author tells us how she was tender to her and watched helplessly as she floated into death. Though there had been instances where Manjula felt ignored by her parents while Malini became "the apple of their eye", yet she understood the gravity and the need of the situation. Manjula's love for her sister is really genuine.

Question 2.

The sister does not appear in the play but is central to it. What picture of her is built in your mind from references in the play?

Answer:

Manjula Nayak's bestselling book features her real-life sister, Malini, who was a victim of meningomyelocele which made her undertake a series of operations, reducing her existence to misery. We find some glimpses of Malini of how she was more intelligent, more attractive and vivacious than the author herself and a very sensitive person. It was as if "she radiated life from the wheelchair to which she was confined." It was Malini herself who shifted with Manjula in Jayanagar and adjusted herself beautifully to the smaller house.

Question 3.

When the image says- "Her illness was unfortunate. But because of it, she got the best of everything."

(i) What is the nature of Manjula's reply?

(ii) How can it be related to what follows in the play?

Answer:

(i) Manjula was highly defensive on her part after hearing "Her illness was unfortunate. But because of it, she got the best of everything." She retaliated back by saying that Malini never demanded for anything. However, we can trace a stench of insecurity in Manjula as

she fumbles for words and ends up defining her sister as “the apple of their eye”. She understood that her sister needed to be the priority to her parents but somehow couldn’t accept it fully. She even saw how she was “hungry for life” despite her limited resources and wondered whether she would have prospered had she received all that love and attention. Somewhere, Manjula is caught up in a comparative analysis between Malini and herself.

(ii) While answering to the questions posed at Manjula, she constantly reveals the noble personality of her sister while trying to collate herself with her and an attempt to conceal her diffidence simultaneously. When Manjula realized her inferiority to her sister, she evoked a defensive tone and said, “I did write a bestseller”. She understood her sister’s constraints and the attention meted out to her. But she had to convince herself that she actually understood the situation. The voice of the image, if taken as the author’s spokesperson, made a comment which made the author blurt out the question that had left her perturbed, “Are you implying that I ‘used’ her?” However, she quickly dissembled her subconscious confessions and narrated how she too had been a sufferer. She counterfeited the negative portrayal of her character as the need for a villain counterpart. Manjula feels that it was because of her illness that made her gain people’s attention, sympathy and even from her husband, Pramod Murty, to whom she was very close.

Question 4.

What are the issues that the playwright satirizes through this TV monologue of a celebrity?

Answer:

Through the TV monologue of a celebrity, we get to know the suppressed and unrealized inhibitions, insecurities and covetousness in an individual’s sub consciousness and how he tries to mask them by sympathizing with the person stirring such emotions in him. Again, it is through this TV monologue, that exposes the vernacular gap between communities and the intense concern of commoners as well as intellectuals about the royalties earned through English writing instead of focusing on the subject or issue being expressed or put up in the writing.

Talking About The Play

Question 1.

“Broken Images” takes up a debate that has grown steadily since 1947- the politics of language in Indian literary culture, specifically in relation to modern Indian languages and English. Discuss.

Answer:

The citizens of a multilingual country require some sort of common communication within an administrative unit. And the term assigned to this tongue is known as the “link”

language in India. The central controversy regarding Hindi as the “link” language is seen to be persistent since Independence. While Northern India advocate for Hindi the “link” language, Southern India feels that Hindi would be an advantage for the Northerners, especially in the Administrative service examinations. The debate goes on to further highlight how English conforms only to the Elitist and minor fragment of the Indian population whereas the southern and eastern part of the country feel that designating Hindi with the title of “link” language would fall as a liability to those who do not speak Hindi at all. On the contrary, English, being a widespread and diasporic language is at least comprehensible to a large section of the nation. Besides, each state has its own linguistic minority groups and the use of an official language in those areas is again a major controversy.

Question 2.

The play deals with a Kannada woman writer who unexpectedly produces an international bestseller in English.

(i) Can a writer be a truly bilingual practitioner?

(ii) Does writing in an “other language” amount to betrayal of the mother tongue?

Answer:

(i) A writer is an artist who might experience or observe a situation and its aftermath or repercussions, conceives them comprehends them, and produces them in the language which makes him ponder on its authentic texture. While exposing his experiences, he undergoes a monologue in his psychic space where he questions, justifies and edits his thoughts. This again happens in the language which makes the artist contend and contest with himself. Each language comes with certain baggage and prejudices which can be traced in the vocabulary and use of language expressions. The mind captures certain moments in a particular language through which the writer associates himself with the instance. This language is his voice to give words to that context. Often, the writer sees things through the perspective of a third person and tries to adopt the language of the other to empathize with the context. Thus, a writer can be a truly bilingual practitioner.

(ii) Creativity and perspective require a mind to observe and a language to comprehend and articulate a phenomenon. An artist produces an art which is a self-expression of his life. It is life itself. The articulation of his life depends on the language that had made him reflect, introspect and comprehend it. A language can either dilute or concentrate an observation. The socio-political, cultural and historical background of a language makes it different from another tongue and it is these variations that condition a language's function of what, where or how to emphasize an issue or simply an observation. A language can either bestow a fact with the ultimate truth or make a truth stand as a bare fact alone. It is language that impresses simplicity on a beautiful essence and it is language again that transfers this aura to some other miscellaneous occurrence. Thus, as educated citizens, it is more important to focus on the product of an artist rather than judging him for not employing his mother tongue in his work. The art should be appraised in its own indigenous space and in its own original colour.

Question 1.

Why do you think the playwright has used the technique of the image in the play?

Answer:

Girish Karnad is more interested in the subjection of binaries in an individual. The interplay of these antithetical selves is what the playwright is interested in. There remains a gap between the outer and the inner selves of an individual and it is through this space that one questions, adjusts, negotiates, compromises, debates, justifies and finally settles for something. What the outer personality projects, the inner man might not conform to it and this is how there arises a split between them. This rift between these two images leads to an inner turmoil in an individual. The playwright has employed the technique of image in the play to bring out the subliminal fight between them. Besides, it can also be decoded as to how identical images can contain and operate on antithetical modes.

Question 2.

The play is called a monologue. Why is it made to turn dialogic?

Answer:

Girish Karnad's play "Broken Images" is based on the rift present between an individual's outer or public image and his inner or private image. The home that we house within us often does not fit to the demands of the world. On an apparent scale, the play is a monologue but the playwright has employed the technique of image to expose two different selves contained in an individual. He has also revealed and contrasted the weaknesses of one with the strength of the other self, the arbitrariness of one with the confidence of the other, the guilt and supposed embarrassment of oneself with the soothing yet pointed accusation of the inner self and the defencelessness of the outer image with the controlled concentration of the inner image. Thus, to bring out the suppressed mitigation, hesitation and unclarity within one self, the playwright has introduced the system of dialogism to detach the internal turmoil from one's interior space and stage it as a separate show. The dialogism brings clarity and hits at the frailties and apparent disloyalties of Manjula and helps the reader comprehend her actions and inhibitions.

Question 3.

What is the posture the celebrity adopts when the camera is on and when it is off?

Answer:

We notice a split in the behavior of Manjula while the camera is on and again when it is kept off in the sense that the author seems to be confident with what she needs to say before the camera but a certain inhibition lurks in her mind as she said those words. She hesitates with what she wants to say which probably she cannot do before the camera. She comes straight, prepared and equipped with what she would say. Without being distracted or loitering on some unsaid words or immaterialized contemplation, she directly blurts out her pre-conceived words. Her on camera performance seems like some practiced stage show. She even employs rhetoric in her speech to draw the confidences of the listeners. However, as the camera goes off, Manjula seems to retain her casual, normal self by being completely at ease. She puts up some legit and honest confessions regarding herself and her relationship with her sister, Malini. In her words, one could trace the insoluble insecurity, some momentary maleficence, gorged guilt, unaddressed inhibitions, and some lingering limitations and a partial unacceptability of withdrawn limelight from her. We get to see a more humane Manjula off the camera apart from the prim, proper and trimmed Manjula Nayak.