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ENGLISH; BA (HONS) Part-II, Paper-II, Unit-III, Short Story

"The Kite"

GIAN GESH KUMAR

AND College, Patna.

"The Kite": Critical appreciation.

"The Kite" is a short story written in 1947 by William Somerset Maugham. In the Kite the whole story is given a symbolic significance through flying a kite. Through this symbolic significance, here, the storywriter tries to depict the complexities of human nature. It depicts the sub-conscious level of human psyche that often leads one to behave uncontrollably. Before we come to appreciate this story, we first start with the title of the story. Why the storywriter has entitled this story 'The Kite'? What is the connection of 'The Kite' to human nature? Herbert, the main sufferer of the story, was living a life completely controlled by dominating mother Mrs. Sumbury. Though, he had grown young of twentyone years and had a fine job too, but he still was under the suzerainty of his mother. Even, as a man, he behaved like a model child, who, despite being stubborn, would never disobey his mother. The only freedom he ever had was flying kite. He was at the age of seven when he

asked his mother for a kite. Mrs Sunbury narcissist by her nature, did not find any harm in it and bought a kite for him on his next birthday. Despite all the restrictions, Herbert finds pleasure in flying kite and not only Herbert but also his parents find it amusing. So Herbert had little choices and his life is controlled by his mother. His only freedom was to fly kite on every Saturday along with his parents. So, for Herbert, from salary to Saturday everything was under the control of her mother. So only thing that he could control was kite. The flying of kite might have satisfied his inner oppressed person. He felt free and amused when flying kite with family on Saturday-afternoon as though he can or may accomplish many things in his life.

one of his accomplishment is his marriage. When Herbert fell in love with Betty and decided to marry with her, Mrs Sunbury very reluctantly accepted his decision. It hurt Mrs Sunbury's ego because she did not like Betty. It is noticeable that after Herbert's decision, mother and some are no more good friends, as they used to be. Mrs Sunbury describes Betty "Common, she is, Common as dirt". However, Herbert

married. Betty and shifts from his parents' place, Betty, too realizes that Herbert is too much attached with his mother. Though the couple lives separate from Herbert's parent, but Herbert keeps on meeting them for kite flying. This makes Betty angry. So disagreement starts from here and becomes frequent between the ~~them~~. Finally the situation becomes worse and Betty smashed the kite of Herbert. Herbert takes it emotionally and feels that Betty has tried to end his relationship with his mother by tearing the kite. So, he leaves Betty. He even prefers going jail rather than providing alimony demanded by Betty.

So, to conclude, the kite has multiple implications in this story. It reflects the bonding between Herbert and Mrs Sunbury. Also, it symbolizes Herbert's own self as Herbert feels somehow akin to it. Whenever he flies the kite it gives him a sense of freedom. It allows him to go beyond reach of his mother. It also implies that it is kind of umbilical connection between a mother and a son. Throughout the whole story, we see, two different kind of women, firstly Herbert's mother and then his wife trying to control his life in their

own way. Towards the end of the story, we see Herbert prefers going jail and living his own life rather than to be controlled by either of both.

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