

Literary and Spiritual Dimensions of the Novel “The Peacemaker”

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Abstract

‘The Peace Maker’ has depicted a young soldier’s life during, before and after his period of service in the Vietnam War along with the perspective of his family’s thoughts, their fears and their bravery. The literary perspective seen in the Novel along with the Spiritual dimension can help in understanding the concept of Peace much better. First, Literary dimension mainly focuses on Literature and their forms to show how the Novel has flown throughout and has been interwoven by the author. Secondly, it is always common to see any person turn towards God most of the time. The Spiritual Dimension in the Novel is also shown to see the focus of the Novel.

Keywords: Literary, Spiritual, God, Peace, War.

Introduction

‘The Peace Maker’ was written by Jack Cavanaugh and published in the year 1999 with information from the real life survivors of the war and has created this story. He has depicted a young soldier’s life during, before and after his period of service in the Vietnam War. He has also brought out the perspective of his family’s thoughts, their fears and their bravery. Lets look at its Literary and Spiritual dimensions.

Literary Dimension in the Novel “The Peacemaker”

This story is a plot within another plot. In the novel, there is a family consisting of four members– a father: Nat Morgan, A mother: Allegra Morgan, a sister: Paige Morgan (the protagonist of the main plot) and a brother: Travis Morgan: (the protagonist of the sub-plot). The main plot revolves around Paige, her views, her decisions, the hardship she undergoes, her loss, her gains and finally her realisation to truth and her discovery of faith leading to God. The sub-plot opens up when Travis leaves the house and starts his journey to Vietnam as a recruit. The author has developed Travis to show the world what a soldier might undergo during and after their time of service. There are many other sub-characters and real life characters, who drop in and drop out of the novel here and there. But it is this family, their views and their lives that the author is portraying through the novel.

The main plot is about all four of them being together, being separated and later rejoined amidst struggles and sorrows. This plot has Paige as the protagonist and the author brings out the thoughts and the actions from her point of view. By doing so, he also brings in his memories because “he remembers drugs on campus, underground newspapers and hearing about the demonstration and riots on the college campuses.” (423) Jack has remodeled his experience, added up with biographies and autobiographies expressed by others and has created the character, Paige as a college student who has seen protests against the war. As the novel opens, it starts with the protest of Paige; every word shows that their family has been a good united family so far. Even though arguments have taken place about the deployment of Travis, there was peace till that Sunday (the novel begins), when she tries out a small protest to save her brother’s life. Though unsuccessful, she paid for her actions. Paige and Travis leave the house on the same day. At this juncture, the plots divide and the sub-plot begins. But though they have been on the same road for a long time, the turn in life that they take on that particular day is very different. Paige is chased out into the world, undergoes a lot of struggles, loses a friend, matures in life, understands situations, distressed, upset and finally rejoins her parents from jail.

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The sub-plot is another piece. It is a plot embedded within the main plot. In this plot, Travis is the protagonist and the author has merged in all the inputs he has received from the veterans, people who survived the war and their families into it. Though the author has not been to the war, yet he has been able to bring in many of the events and incidents that has happened during the war. In Chapter 2 of the novel, from the very beginning, the author describes the plight of Travis. "Hanging between two worlds. Claimed by both, living in neither." (25) From this chapter, Travis starts to show the mind-set or the struggle of a real soldier. Travis also plays the role of a protagonist from this chapter. Since Paige is the protagonist of the main plot, she takes the upper hand, though Travis has the same amount of importance, mainly because of the depth in the character and heavy emotions, he is the protagonist of the sub - plot. He is a tool used to describe a soldier's heart and the struggles undergone by them. The author shows Travis as the strong character who even among the tortures of war stays stable in character and health without drinking alcohol or taking drugs. He is also portrayed as a hero in two places – 1) when he saves Gower and himself. 2) When he saves the baby. Though Travis suffers fear of darkness, the sound of continuous bombing, etc., yet, his good sense of action, his faith, belief and fear of God, helps him to return back as a hero with good character and personality.

As the plot merges together when Travis returns home from Vietnam, the author again split it to show the traumatic state of the soldiers who are always ready to fight risking their lives for the sake of the nation. Travis is so scared of darkness that he runs crazy. As they rejoin in the convention, the author places a clear idea that

- 1) Families are created to help every human being in their happy and their hard times. "There is nothing we can't face together as a family with God's help." (418)
- 2) Secondly but mainly, it is the faith and belief of a person that shoots up first during any trouble or fear.

Both the protagonists come in and out of the story and give out their feeling by sharing their thought and situations with the readers. Cavanaugh has fairly brought out the situations and incidents of the reality in a wonderful fictional manner, making the novel a wonderful literary piece. Ending the story with happiness brings out a satisfying relief without much of sorrow. It is not a comical or a romantic story but it is a patriotic story that is very realistic and down to earth.

Spiritual Dimension in the Novel "The Peacemaker"

"The Peacemaker" by Jack Cavanaugh is also a religious story which the author has brought in the redemption of many from the troubled life, helping them realize what was their purpose of being here in the world and how to find out the inner peace which is much more precious than anything else. The author has given the information about the war and the necessity of peace needed for everyone in the novel from the very beginning and has introduced the spiritual aspect with the special prayer for the son in the very first chapter before going to the war, specially for the son to return back safely.

The word 'Peace' occurs only once in chapter 14 of 'The Peace Maker' as "did I find any measure of peace."; Where the mother and the grandmother are both talking about the son/grandson with heaviness in heart for Travis who has gone for war in Vietnam. The son in reality has fallen into the carved man-made chamber not knowing how to get out of the chamber along with one more soldier who is wounded. Whereas the mother who is far away, has a feeling that some kind of misfortune has happened for her son and so calls for her mother-in-law to support her during the time her troubled heart. It is at this point of time that the author introduced a little bit of depth in the Christian essence of prayer. Though the stereotype way of praying occurs before chapter 14, it is after that the author slowly increases the depth in the thought of their religion. After chapter 14, we also see Travis calling for God's help. Thought or speech about God and prayer occurs now and then very rarely within a sentence or two.

The essence of the Jesus movement begins in Chapter 27 where Terri and Allen introduce themselves as people who have been chosen to serve and preach. In Chapter 28, there is a testimony told by the person, Moose, who accompanies Paige and also the portion where Paige is lead into a detailed analyses of knowing who she is and what does God wants her to do or become. As it is told in the back cover of the book, “Paige finds a cause worth living for when she encounters the Jesus Movement and begins a personal journey with God.” Paige gets to know her purpose of living and it is the revolution on love and spiritual renewal.

Chapter 29 is a scene in Vietnam, where the father, Nat, goes in search of his son and finds him. A small pinch of hope in God accompanies the father in the right direction. In chapter 30, thank God for their reunion and get-together, it does not last for long, instead each and every character in their own ways are driven apart in their own work. Chapter 31 shows out the trauma that Travis faces and so loses his grip on reality and runs in search of light which can also be taken as the search for the light of God; where in the Bible, a verse said by Jesus goes like this: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Light” - John 14 :6. So it is a focus on Travis who is in need of help and in search of light. Chapter 32 again gives a lot of concentration on Christian faith, get-together, spiritual gathering, and the finding of the lost sheep. Allen and the people from the catacomb are in the process of finding out Travis the lost sheep.

The author at the end finishes with the thought that “there is nothing we can’t face together as a family with God’s help.” which brings in the meaning, “Unity is strength.” Along with the Unity, when the focus of the family turns toward God, Jesus can help the whole family overcome all kinds of troubles, trials and tribulations together. So the spiritual dimension speaks about attain the peace that only God can give.

Conclusion

First of all, since the text is a novel and done in the field of Literature, the Literary perspective of the Novel is analysed. But in reality, speaking about Peace, talking to anyone in the world, the focus of a person goes towards God when something unusual happens. Speaking of war and soldiers in this Novel, the author has clearly portrayed that God is the only one who can save their beloved ones from all kinds of trauma, fear or even death. Spiritually God comes first and worldly, family comes first. Most probably, everyone focuses on these two for peace. This can be seen almost in all the novels. Either directly or indirectly, Peace is seen in all the novels.

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