

# Never Never Nest as a Critique of Materialism

Ramesha H R

Assistant Professor, Dept of English Field Marshal K.M.Cariappa College  
Madikeri-571201,Karnataka, India

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## ABSTRACT

This article has made an attempt to study how the dramatist Cedric Mount has shown the predicament of the modern man/woman. This play-**Never Never Nest**- is studied how consumerism makes human beings victims in the era of modern technology. Human beings obviously think that material goods and things bring them peace and solace but, in reality, they give only temporary satisfaction. If one leads a happy life he/she should understand the hard realities of the life and know the difference between appearance, and reality. All these issues have been brought under the discussion. Including these elements, further, it focuses on how the characters portrayed in this play represent those who run after attractive things available in the market and fall into the pit of disillusionment; plus, how they are trapped by the market's strategy of 'buy now and pay later'.

**Keywords:** Consumerism, Happiness, Irony, Modernity, Materialism, Philosophy, Psychology, Society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Frank Sydney Box is a very popular name in British literary and cultural scenario and is widely recognized as Cedric Mount. His contribution to both literature and cinema is highly distinguished. With the collaboration of his wife Muriel Box, in the year 1945 he wrote screenplay for the movie *The Seventh Veil* and it got Oscar prize in the category of screenplay. His other best known works of screenplays are *A Girl in a Million*, *Street Corner*, *Too Young to Love* and *The Happy Family*. Despite being a renowned film producer and screenplay writer, he had become so famous in the field of literature, especially in the British theatre. In the year 1951 both he and his wife worked together for the play *The Seventh Veil*, which was already got its fame being hit film of the year 1945. This play was first shown at the

Theatre Royal, Brighton and was much admired. Whether in films or in plays, he intensively criticized the contemporary social values, for him theatre was the sharpest means of educating the people, not only that, it inculcates the hypocritical mind sets. He chooses for all his plays the burning issues of his time, interestingly, though he takes contemporary issues, they have the quality of transcendence as they stir the thoughts of human beings across the globe.

## II. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This one act play has a very striking social relevance and deals with the middle class family's never satisfying desire of owning a home, car and other minimum requirements. But the fact is that a desire is the root cause of all miseries. Though much has been said about the devastating effects of a desire by the great thinkers and philosophers, humans do not learn any lesson. When they fail in life, they rebuke life as if it has taken revenge against them. The reality is that whatever human beings do or act is merely reflection of their mind. The mind is driving force, it causes everything. One has to control it to have a meaningful life without being attracted to things which actually not required for life. But interesting thing is that human beings make life more complex wishing to possess many things. They consider that they are the part and parcel of their life and is the source of happiness. Man/woman, in general, is very much attached to own material goods and money. Of course money is required without which the modern life cannot be imagined. But the fact is that money is not everything, instead, it is a means, by which one must meet his/her ends. Instead of living a happy life by fulfilling the demands met by their income, they have greed; ultimately it will spoil their beautiful life. This mind set has been beautifully portrayed by the Romantic poet William Wordsworth in his thought provoking

sonnet **The World is Too Much with Us**. In it he vehemently condemns the materialistic attitude of human beings. He claims saying if one becomes disconnected with the nature being attracted to worldly matters he will eventually loses tranquility in life:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers-  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;

The same can be felt when we read Cedric Mount's *The Never Never Nest*. Its very nucleus is ridiculing at the modern man's life style, it scathingly attacks how he/she is caught in the web of miseries by being attracted to material goods which he/she buys on the scheme of '**buy now and pay later**'. Though it is a comic one act play about a young couple Jack and Jill, it actually is tragedy of a modern man. This play has only four characters, and mainly revolves around Jack, Jill and Aunt Jane. The couple, Jack and Jill, leads leading their life by buying various goods on the installment scheme. Their Aunt Jane visits them and advises them that the way they lead life is not good, because instead of enjoying the real happiness they are in illusion to have it only by possessing goods. She notices that they recklessly and illogically spend money on unwanted things, and, the money they spend on them is not actually theirs. The dramatist Cedric Mount is very much concerned with modern man's life style and the way he/she leads life. He shows this satirically and succeeds in portraying how this newly married couple Jack and Jill, representing all who wish to live buying things on installments, get caught in the vicious circle of market strategy that is 'buy now and pay later'. The title itself serves a very meaningful purpose by being the eye-catching satire, that very satire is that repetition of the word never conveys the idea that they (Jack and Jill) will never be able to build or possess their home.

They have a car, a house, a music player, a set of furniture and many more things. After their marriage, their aunt Jane pays them a visit. She gets shocked seeing those things in their house, because, she does not understand in what way they arrange money to buy all those things. She is very aware of their salary and the sum of amount she gave as gift on their wedding. She practically calculates that the income they have shall not suffice to buy all those things. He defends that all those goods have been bought on the installments. Unless the full payment is done the things they have in their house is not fully theirs. In the following conversation it is subtly portrayed:

Jill: ..we could never buy a car outright, we can enjoy all the pleasures of motoring for a mere five pounds down.

Aunt Jane: And the rest by easy installments, I suppose.

Jill: Exactly.

Aunt Jane: Exactly. And what about the radio-

Jack: Well, that's the-

Aunt Jane: And the piano?

Jack: Well of course.

Aunt Jane: And the furniture- ... belongs to Mr. Sage, I suppose?

Jill: Er-yes.

Aunt Jane : Well I'm not going to sit on Mr. Sage's part...

After the advent of globalization things are sold at people's door step. They are provoked to buy through advertisements and other gimmick ways. Manufacturing companies and other agencies attract people to buy their commodities, though they have no money they easily trap them saying not to pay at the time of purchase, instead, ask them to pay later. So people, being seduced by their marketing tactics, they buy their products though they are actually not required. By doing so they fall into the pit of debts which they never be able to pay off fully. When they do not pay off their debts, they mortgage all the things they have. Before they buy the goods, they think that they will be happy and their life will be so beautiful. But unfortunately they lose peace and happiness permanently. By the time they come to realize life is almost coming to an end. They think that illusion is the reality, but, after losing the very satisfaction and beauty of life they feel an utter disappointed and disillusioned. Presaging all this Aunt Jane advises them saying: Now. I'm sorry if I sounded rude, really I'm shocked to find the way you're living. I've never owed a penny in my life-cash down, that's my motto and I want you to do the same. Now look, here's little cheque I was meaning to give you, anyway. Suppose you take it and pay off just one of yours bills- so that you can say one thing at least really belongs to you.

Having said this she leaves their home. As soon as she leaves Jill opens the cover and becomes so excited seeing the cheque of ten pounds. Immediately she calls the nurse and sends her to hospital to pay off the hospital bill. If bill is paid, their baby will be theirs, because no full payment has been made towards the hospital bill. This ending is very sarcastic and ironical because the playwright ridicules at modern way of life which runs on fully installment base. They have many unwanted things like radio, refrigerator, car etc. In

fact Jack wants this cheque to pay off car installment. He never thinks of the fact that they have a baby and its hospital expenditure is not paid off. Instead of paying off this, what he thinks is to pay off car installment. They could live a very simple and wonderful life having the comforts meeting with their income. But they run after materials and goods instead of leading a peaceful and happy life. If they do not have all these, atleast they could bear the hospital expenditure and have their baby without debts.

Through this small play the playwright has made a serious attack on the consumerism and its tactics, and, shows how modern life has been addicted to fashion having lost the real beauty and truth. This sort of life makes man/woman totally disconnected for the rhythm of nature and human bond. Instead of seeing the real beauty and enjoyments modern man has immersed in artificial things. As Wordsworth rightly puts in the sonnet *The World is..*

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! / This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;/ The winds that will be howling at all hours,/ And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;/ For this, for everything, we are out of turn;/ It moves us not, Great God!

### III. CONCLUSION

The symbolic title **The Never Never Nest** gets its real meaning at the end. The dramatist has done it superbly letting the readers or the audience to think that the house they live won't be a home, it will remain as house only unless they start living naturally instead of showing pretense. They must realize the fact that material goods never give them happiness; and, one must lead life accepting the experience if worst or best equally in a compose mind. They should also know that each individual is unique, so that no one's life must be compared with anybody. The true spirit of life may lie in natural objects like flower; it can give human beings an immense pleasure. So the writer indirectly says that pleasure cannot be bought but felt and experienced by being closely connected with the nature.

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