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The Light of a Single Candle; A Study of Mama in Lorraine Hansberry's Raisin in the Sun

By Dr. Kalyani Anbu

Introduction- Lorraine Hansberry in the character of Mama in Raisin in the Sun presents positive solutions for feministic issues. She has proved that God is the ultimate solution for life's problems. Mama is blessed with a spirit of love, and deep faith which enables her to live a life of self sacrifice, free of grudges and bitterness. Her total surrender and the unshakable faith are grounded in the faithfulness of God and the immutability of His word. She suffers pain, but her faith in God enables her to deal with pain in such a way that it does not make her bitter, but makes her better.

Lorriraine Hansberry creates a world of love, concern and compassion in her play where the execution of God's will in the lives of individuals results in restoration of peace, joy and hope. Inspite of the tragic situations of life. Mama, has a clear vision of life. She proves that with spiritual clarity one can triumph over emptiness.

Mama is a powerful example of emotional maturity and mental health. Her ability to love and care for others is directly related to her undying faith in God. The following lines reiterate the view.

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Introduction

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Lorriraine Hansberry creates a world of love, concern and compassion in her play where the execution of God's will in the lives of individuals results in restoration of peace, joy and hope. Inspite of the tragic situations of life. Mama, has a clear vision of life. She proves that with spiritual clarity one can triumph over emptiness.

Mama is a powerful example of emotional maturity and mental health. Her ability to love and care for others is directly related to her undying faith in God. The following lines reiterate the view.

Mama (kindly): 'Course you going to be a doctor, honey, God willing.

Beneatha Entry: God hasn't got a thing to do with it.
Mama: Beneatha – that just wasn't necessary.
Beneatha Well – neither is God. I get sick of hearing about God.

Mama: Beneatha!

Beneatha: I mean it! I'm just tired of hearing about God all the time. What has He got to do with anything? Does he pay tution?

Mama: You 'bout to get your fresh little jaw slapped!
Ruth: That must what she words, all right!

Beneatha: Why? Why can't I say what I want to around here, like everybody else?

Mama: It don't sound nice for a young girl to say things like that – you wasn't brought up that way. Me and your father went to trouble to get you and Brother to church every Sunday.

Beaneatha: Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God – there is only man and it is he who makes miracles!

(Mama absorbs this speech, studies her daughter and rises slowly and crosses to Beneatha and slaps her powerfully across the face. After, there is only silence and the daughter drops her eyes from her mother's face, and Mama is very tall before her.)

Mama: Now – you say after me, in my mother's house there is still God. (There is a long pause and Beneatha stares at the floor wordlessly. Mama repeats the phase with precision and cool emotion.) In my mother's house there is still God.

Beneatha: In my mother's house there is still God.

The courageous, long suffering stead fast nature of Mama is revealed at the time of crises when Walter loses all the money. Her ability to cope with any new situation is remarkable. She has a strong self will and the ability to face life, even disappointment and not allow circumstances to destroy her.

"Beneatha is hart broken, because the money set apart for her study is also lost. She asserts that individual in that room is no brother of mine." In the course of conversation Mama says that she has taught her children to love to which Beneatha retorts, Love him? There is nothing left to love. Mama diligently follows the idea that one must positively and definitely extend forgiveness especially to the one who has injured one in any way. The following words of Mama throw light on her character.

There is always something left to love. And if you ain't learned that, you ain't learned nothing. (Looking at her.) Have you cried for that boy today? I don't mean for yourself and for the family 'cause we lost the money. I mean for him: what he been through and what it done to him. Child, when do you think is the time to love somebody the most? When they done good and more things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning – because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself' cause the world done whipped him so! When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into

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account what hill and valleys he come thorough before he got to wherever he is.

By patient listening, wise probing, enlightened questioning and timely counseling she leads her family from a life of insecurity, frustration and restlessness to a life of fulfillment, forgiveness and love.

The words of Emmet Fox Concur with her experience, "There are few people in the world, who have not at sometime or other bear been hurt, really hurt, by someone else; or been disappointed, or injured, or deceived or misled. Such things sink into the memory which usually cause inflamed and festering wounds and there is only one remedy; they have to be plucked out and thrown away. And the one and the only way to do that is by forgiveness." (86).

Courageous endurance of hardships imposed on her ministrations of love to others, Mama becomes a symbol of sacrifice and suffering. Sorrows and disappointment gives substance to her life. Hardships make her character. Thus she stands our as an outstanding figure. Life of Mama concurs with the Maxim which says, 'There is not enough darkness in the whole world to put out the light of a single candle'.

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