

A STUDY ON THE STOICAL ENDURANCE OF MAURYA IN J.M. SYRINGER'S RIDERS TO THE SEA AND ANNA FIERLING IN BRECHT'S MOTHER COURAGE

G. KEERTHI

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Thiruvalluvar Govt. Arts College, Rasipuram, India

ABSTRACT

Right through ages, in possessing the power of resistance are mothers universal. Time may differ; Age may differ; language may differ; environment may differ; yet mother never differs in showering her affection on her young ones.

KEYWORDS: Stoical Endurance of Maurya in J.M. Syringer's Riders and Anna Fierling in Brecht's Mother Courage

INTRODUCTION

Rightly has it been recognised by Abraham Lincoln, in the following lines:

“What I am, what are all I am

I owe to my mother”

Now her else can we hope to see such unity in diversity than their power of resistance to protect their off springs. This trait of her reminds one of the

“one aim, one purpose and one soul” of Scholar Gypsy.

power of mother stuns the readers when we consider Maurya of J.M.

Syringer's Riders to the Sea and Anna Fierling of Bertolt Brecht's Mother

Courage which exhibit the sorrow inflicted upon them by the absence of their sons

Mother Courage is the greatest play of the 20th century and perhaps also the greatest anti-war play of all time. It depicts the fortunes of Anna Fierling who makes her living from the war. The price the war gets for courage's livelihood is her children Eilif, Swiss cheese and Katrin, each of whom she loses while doing business. Her efforts prove to be futile. She could foretell their fates. But nobody heeds to her. The result is their deaths. This refusal at the hands of her own sons and daughter creates the necessity to possess the power of resistance.

Courage always protects her interests shrewdly, inquiring into the fat of the war with only her profit in mind. Her practices emerge from the social conditions that determined the characters, committing her to the war. Ultimately she will lose each of her children as a result. A parasite of war, she follows the armies of the thirty years war, supporting herself and her children with her canteen wagon. She remains opportunistically fixed on her survival, winning her name when harling a cartful of bread through a city under bombardment. She understands that virtues in wartime become fatal to their possessors, Courage will ironic see her children's deaths from the outset, foretelling their fates in scene one.

Courage's Solamon – like wisdom never enables her to oppose the war. The price the war will exact for courage's livelihood is her children, each of which she loses while doing business. Her courage is her will to survive, a will that often requires her cowardice. She refuses to recognize her son; Katrin's death will not incite her revolt. Instead, she will resume her journey with the wagon, in some sense damned her labour for eternity.

Riders to the Sea is a short poetic play that depicts the perennial failure of the Aran Islanders who work with and on the sea. Maurya an old woman loses all her four sons to the sea, whose fierce tides and winds make life difficult and dangerous. The power of the sea is the main theme of the play: it is both provider and destroyer; it provides life, connection with the mainland, but it takes life. The dramatic structure of the play centres around the sea: in the beginning there is suspense as to whether the sea has given back the dead body of the young man it has taken. At the end there is suspense as to whether the last remaining son will survive the storm. The power of the elements is demonstrated to the audience in the opening scene the wind tears open the door of the cottage. The main epic speech describes the destruction of the men of the family. As the old woman tells of past tragedies, the next and last one is re-enacted. This shows the audience that her presentiments and fears were justified; it demonstrates the struggle with the elements and the cycle of death; the ancient ritual of the community in the face of death; the stoic resignation and strength of the old woman.

Many elements of the play remind one of the classical tragedies of antiquity: the compelling structure, the foreshadowing of the tragedy and its inevitability, the element of guilt which is not personal guilt, the stoic acceptance of fate, the great simplicity and dignity of the main character. The play is not a political parable, but it had a significant political impact. "It counteracted the colonial view of the Irish as a rather savage, primitive uncultured people. It shows a family struggling against overwhelming odds to survive, and maintaining dignity in defeat"(95)says Ferriter, Diarmaid Green David rightly observes, "The play shows the stoic acceptance of fate, the great simplicity and dignity of the main character."(60) *Price Alan considers Riders to the sea* as "a play of reality"(24). It shows that poverty does not of necessity mean poverty of spirit.

Maurya becomes pessimistic even while she is still not sure of the fate of her son. Even the idea of Bartley leaving to sell the horses makes her nervous, she's afraid of losing her last son, her pessimism is obvious when she says "What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave". Maurya is completely destroyed by the death of the other men in her life. The death of her second to last son left her with an unabated pessimism that Bartley would die when he left to sell the horses. The peasant family, as of course all other people of the island, live all their lives in open view of the sea. They are familiar with the image of the sea, as a mighty demon which looms large and dark and mysterious before their minds.

The sea as 'a character' is never off the stage, nor is it for a moment off the mind of inmates of the cottages. How can they close their eyes or minds to it seeing that it has already swallowed four strong young sons of the family and it is almost sure it has made an end of fifth, Michael? The monster is never for a moment absent from the thoughts of the three women. Bartley too knows the risk and the chances. But he is manly enough to put forth courage to perform his duty by the family. He silently agrees with Cathleen when she rebukes the whimpering mother. "It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea", thereby bringing out the association of the sea with the life of islanders. It is a demon whom the poor islanders have no means of shunning.

She fears Bartley too will be doomed like others. She warns him severely. But as expected he too fails to listen to

her words. This gender inequality necessitates her to possess the power of resistance elemental to face life.

The plays taken for study, show many similarities which are instrumental in molding the minds of Maurya and Courage. What sea is to Maurya and her poor islanders is, war to Courage and her children. Be it war or sea, they have no means of shunning it. Engaged in the fight – though an unequal fight between the Evil in Nature in the former and the Evil in man in the latter, as Hardy expounds in his tragic novels – inscrutable Destiny, they recognise their fate as independent from their realm.

To them life is bleak, stark and horrible- even nihilistic where the only peace is death and the death of all those one loves. Neither Maurya nor Courage could revolt against sea or war.

It is their remarkable power of resistance which enables them not to yield to these demons but to strive and thereby to thrive. Hence we find eventual peace on Maurya's last words :

“We must be satisfied”

Likewise, we find Mother Courage saying:

“I must get back into business”

She resolves and moves after the regiment.

The said plays show some dissimilarity too. Whereas the time is ‘Thirty Years’ war of 1618 – 1648, the place is Europe and the writer is a German in Mother Courage, in Riders to the Sea the time is 20th Century, the place is Ireland and the writer is an Irish.

In both the plays, time differs, place differs, culture differs and writers differ. Yet Maurya and Courage never differ but tower above in holding within them – the utmost power of resistance, what they and the millions like them have to have for ages to come to get along with life, thus creating an atmosphere that is fit for the creation of a new mythology. “Frailty thy name is woman” is no more. It is and has to be “Power of resistance thy name is woman”.

The stark reality which the present study presents as conclusion will leave the readers into frozen state and to remain so in it for many long hours.

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