

religion. This proves that scientific and spiritual terrain are not far enough or poles apart as the conservatives have been trying to promulgate it amongst the ordinary folk who are hoodwinked into believing the outdated norms of the society claimed to be often founded on religion. For instance through figures from Indian religious myths like *Sita* and *Savitri* proponents of religion have time and again typified women as inherently submissive. The film *Chena Kintu Ajana* candidly negates such belief through Chapalda (Chapal Rani) and Janardanda's (Janardan Rani) intermittent presentation of the episodes from Indian mythology which substantiate the prowess and the dignity of women. The excerpts of the mythological stories like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* etc., presented by the performers prove that art has the liberty to judiciously manipulate the narratives pertaining to religion in order to dismantle the stereotyped beliefs. We see Chapalda enacting a short piece from the *Ramayana* wherein Kaikai is challenging the societal allegation on her of being the heartless mother who sent Rama to exile. Similarly, we see Janardanda as the daunting Mandodari who calls Ravana's action to abduct Sita into question and dares to set her free from the clutches of her husband. Many such interesting episodes become the highlight of the film which negates the outdated belief that a woman is intrinsically docile. Thus, adopting the mode of entertainment, *Chena Kintu Ajana* happens to implicitly but most effectively question gender bias that promulgates superiority of a 'Man' over a 'Woman'. Specifically, the documentary becomes a must watch as various men impersonating women in the film perform this task of dismantling the codes of a 'Man's world'. They are certainly 'Men' as the film proves but those that have most devotedly worked towards exalting their profession from a trite art form to the means of supreme aesthetic delight and a realization of the highest order i.e. the indivisibility of man and woman in the figure of the *ardhanareshwara*. This is reflected in the film towards its close as Satabala Rani is seen praying selflessly for the well-being of the world whose inhabitants have given her nothing but in fact forced her in the long run to quit her profession that she worships so devoutly. Truly, *Chena Kintu Ajana* is not just a film but is a means towards enlightenment that there have been men in the history of Indian art who have testified that no man loses his manliness by dressing up or speaking as a woman. In fact, he loses his manliness only when he lets his ego escalate towards the extent of disregarding the dignity of the opposite sex and therefore, we respect Satabala Rani's and other Ranis' complete surrender of their material ego into the sacred alter of *Natya Yajna*.

Dipankar Dutta Director, *Chena Kintu Ajana*: Dipankar started his career in a film production house as an assistant cinematographer and was later took on the responsibility of a cinematographer. For a brief stint he also freelanced as a cinematographer and editor. Dipankar also spent more than a decade with a reputed advertising agency working in their audio visual as well as creative department. He subsequently setup his own advertising agency D3 and over the last five years have worked for

reputed corporate brands strategizing and executing effective campaigns. Chena Kintu Ajana is Dipankar's first directorial venture in Bengali documentary.

Debojit Majumder Researcher and Producer, *Chena Kintu Ajana*

Debojit has been in the communication profession for nearly a decade. Though an MBA in HR, he has never been a practicing HR professional because of his penchant for communication. Debojit started his career in a public relations agency and spent almost five years working with reputed agencies servicing a gamut of clients belonging to different industries. It is while working on such assignments that he learnt how to plan effective media and public relation campaigns. He has also worked in the corporate communication team of a reputed multinational corporation in the manufacturing industry. This exposure helped him develop his media network across Eastern India. Chena Kintu Ajana is Debojit's first documentary venture as a researcher, script writer and producer.

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Feminist Pressures and Men's Response in *Room to Move*

- Subhash Verma

Abstract: The plays of Hannie Rayson, a Melbourne based contemporary Australian playwright, depict current opportunities for women in terms of expanded educational and career choices, which have in turn led to women's independence from men and to new family arrangements. At the same time her plays reveal that still women continue to face many problems, including sexism, violence, difficulty in balancing work and family demands, greater responsibility than men for child-rearing and domestic work. Rayson claims to be a feminist and writes from a women's perspective. Her genuine concern for the welfare of women is reflected through their realistic, powerful and sensitive portrayal in her plays. She can also be described as a writer of contemporary social issues with a clear cut women's perspective. Her plays frequently satirize and question the blind acceptance of patriarchal beliefs by women. The present paper seeks to analyse Rayson's *Room to move* where she examines how men respond to the shift in gender roles. *Room to Move* highlights the sexual agenda for the 80s. It is a gentle and witty look at male-female relationships. How has feminism affected men? Are men also changing? Is it that only those who are not successful in traditional masculine roles that have embraced feminism as an accepted code? Why don't men talk to each other? Why are they often the last to realize that their brother's marriage is breaking up? Their own marriage? Why is it that women are more likely to be the ones to initiate discussion about their relationships? The play tries to answer these questions.

Keywords: Feminism, men-women relationships, change, family, shift.

Over the past thirty years the cultural expectations of what it means to be female have changed dramatically. Hannie Rayson, a Melbourne-based writer who is widely regarded as the most influential female playwright of the contemporary Australian Theatre, believes, "the emphasis on new and innovative Australian drama meant that women in the Australia theatre became not only the puppets but the puppeteers. And with women pulling the strings, women characters came to life. As Dorothy Hewitt said, until women became writers, the only strong female character in contemporary theatre was that of Coralie Lansdown, in Alex Buzo's 'Coralie Lansdown Says No'" (Cafarella 13). She agrees that there are plenty of roles for women in the plays. One of her aims is to bring female sensibility to the stage. She desires to "create wonderful, huge women who are bouncing off the walls" (Cafarella 13). The female characters in her plays are powerful and complex. Power and responsibilities are in their hands. They take their own decisions and are in high positions. Rayson defines feminism broadly as a movement that enables all people to do and be what they wish without being defined by

sexual roles. Rayson believes, "For more than a decade, feminism has become friend and ally, teacher, provocateur, High Priestess and Indian wrestler for many women who have been struggling privately and publicly to re-define themselves" (Cafarella 13). The present paper seeks to analyse Rayson's *Room to move* where she examines how men respond to the shift in gender roles. In this sense *Room to Move* is a different play from the other plays of Rayson. As women are becoming more active in the public field men have a sense of unease. In Eighties in some professional circles it could be said that when it comes to the battle of the sexes, to be female is to be on winning team. It is a limited truth as in many societies still women are not treated equal with men. On the other hand, despite all attempts to consciously articulate the implications of the changing nature of sex roles, there has been very little attempt to document how this has affected men. Rayson had taken this issue seriously as to how has feminism affected men? Are men also changing? These were the questions in her mind, when she applied to the Myer Foundation for financial assistance to write this play. After getting the assistance she started researching through interviewing men individually and later taking part in a men's discussion group. She wanted to know if and how men were trying to change and what were the problems they were encountering along the way in attempting to deal with different and often contradictory expectations. Is it that only those who are not successful in traditional masculine roles that have embraced feminism as an accepted code? Why don't men talk to each other? Why are they often the last to realize that their brother's marriage is breaking up? Their own marriage? Why is it that women are more likely to be the ones to initiate discussion about their relationships? All these were the questions Rayson wanted to discuss. Putting her theory to test, Rayson held discussions for six weeks over dinner and in society with males, who, she says, were sympathetic to feminist issues and willing to debate such questions as gender equality. "But men", Rayson says, "are becoming more gentle and many are wanting to talk about these things" (Murdoch 17). The result of the research is *Room to Move*. For Philipa Hawker the play "grew out of an interest in how feminism has affected men" (13).

Room to Move highlights the sexual agenda for the 80s. It is a gentle and witty look at male-female relationships. It is the story of Peggy and what happens to her family when a feminist gentleman moves in the house. Peggy, sixty two, a little lonely, takes in a boarder, Bernie, a confused man on the verge of thirty. Peggy has a son, Roger, and a daughter, Virginia. Roger, forty years old, is a solicitor, married to the much younger Ellie (30) and is not paying her the attention she deserves. Virginia is in relationship with middle-aged Howard. Howard finds the adjustment to being dependent on Virginia and doing the household chores hard to handle. The play is an attempt to explore issues of domestic, sexual and family politics. As the play opens Peggy feels happy because in response to her enquiry, a young man Bernie Allcoll gets ready to share her house. When Virginia, Peggy's daughter comes to know that her mother has just rented a room in her house to a twenty-nine years old man, who is half of her age, she is in bewilderment and inquires from her defacto husband

Howard, "Why would a normal, healthy, well adjusted man in his late twenties want to move in with my mother. Answer me that?" (3). To this Howard replies that maybe he needs motherly attention but she is not ready to accept this logic and suspects many other reasons behind the arrival of this young man. Regarding her suspecting nature he exclaims, "You liberated women have changed the face of history" (4). The story of the young man's arrival also reaches Peggy's son Roger and his wife Ellie. Actually Bernie is just out of a five-year relationship with a feminist Elizabeth Woodley. He used to live with her and now she has left him. She runs the International Feminist Bookshop and writes a column for the National Times. She does not even answer his calls. In the whole play Bernie, many times, uses the telephone, dials a number and receives an amplified recorded message. "[Voice: Hello. This is Elizabeth Woodley on 4898940. Unfortunately, I am not home at present, however, if you would like to leave your name, telephone number and any message...]" (5). Every time he disconnects the line and leaves a message "please ring me" (6). For her he has searched fifty-seven places over three weeks. Bernie has moved in with Peggy to get away from these entanglements; he simply requires a set of different ones. Peggy's son Rodger, a fairly conventional lawyer, is not happy with his wife Ellie. She is ten years younger than him. His first wife Margaret was a terrific girl: intelligent, articulate and competent. For Peggy she was more than a daughter-in-law. She was her friend. She was a great reader and wrote a feminist Bible called "Blue Murder". May be the reason for their divorce was "Margaret somehow outgrew Rodger. He stopped and she kept growing. Do you know what I mean?" (21). His second wife Ellie goes to disco and considers her husband a "boring old fart" (27). The play shows "how feminism has opened up many new doors through which men and women can define themselves" (Schembri 13). No doubt that feminism has provided independence to women but it has also affected man-woman relations. Howard, Virginia's de facto, gives a lecture on Sexual Politics across three decades and says:

Let's look for a moment at the fifties male. Here we have someone preoccupied with proving his masculinity, being aggressive in business, being the breadwinner, decision maker, initiator, dominator, possessor. He is preoccupied with physical strength, the power of his presence and his sexual performance. The fifties male stands for the family but he is too busy with his career prospects to take an active role in parenting. He is someone completely out of touch with the process of nurturing. Now, that prescription for male behavior is possibly no longer satisfactory for many of us. We don't want to be like that... Making us do jobs we hate, filling our heads with the fear of failure... (40)

In the second act situations get tense because Bernie develops an affair with both Virginia and Ellie. Everyone in the play knows that both Virginia and Ellie have extra-marital affairs and it makes their husbands more tense. Ellie even openly declares to her husband that she is in love with Barney. Virginia spends most of her nights outside her home and the remaining time she prefers to spend with Maria, her friend. When her husband asks her to spend some time together, she refuses as it is