

Now the door has opened to the West
 And gifts in hand they beckon and they come-
 They will give and take, meet and bring together
 None shall be turned away
 From the shore of this vast sea of humanity
 That is India.⁸ (Kripalani: 227-8)

and especially the meek, mild and lowly. For God himself stands by them and loves them. They make the true nation:

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil. (Das: 46)

In the poem *Deena Dan (The Poor Gift)* he shows how God detests pride and arrogance of wealth and how does he live with the foodless, homeless multitude who do the work and bear the weight of civilization. And he prayed to his God to arouse and awaken this suffering multitude, this working populace in revolt against the accumulated untruth and oppression:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
 Where knowledge is free;
 Where the world has not been broken up
 into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
 into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
 Where the mind is led forward by thee
 into ever-widening thought and action-
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (Das: 53)

This prayer sums up the account of his true contribution to Indian nationalism.

Notes

1. Unless mentioned, translations are mine.
2. Sen says, "It is not enough to call Tagore the true child of Indian Renaissance, he is its creator too. Goethe once compared Shakuntala, the heroine of Kalidasa's great play, simultaneously to 'young years' blossom and the fruits of maturity'. This is applicable to Tagore also".
3. This is from the essay Anayabashyak (the Non-essential) by Tagore to be found in his *Criticism*.
4. This is again to be found in Sen (37).
5. Tagore writes this in his Introduction for the book *Shivaji and the Maratha People*, (1908). The book was originally written by Sharat Kumar Roy. See Sen, Probodh. p.214.
6. For details see Sen, 217.
7. This is discussed in chap. XVI of the book. For details see Sen:220.
8. Kripalani makes this translation from the Bengali poem, *Bharata Tirtha*.

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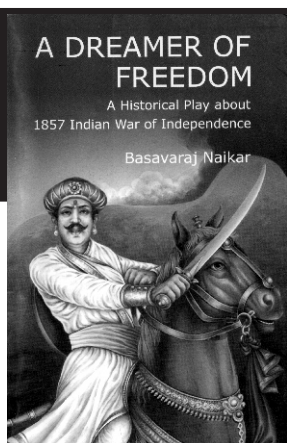
Manasi (1888)

Chandalika

Katha O Kahini.

Naivedya

Geetanjali (1910-11).



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A Dreamer of Freedom

- Basavaraj Naikar

Authorspress, New Delhi

First Edition (2010) | Pages: 222

This historical play depicts the interesting life and struggle of Bhaskararao Bhawe of Naragunda kingdom of Peshwa dynasty, for freedom. The writers' great grandfather Virabhadranayaka was one of the army officers of Nargunda and a confidant of Babasaheb. Naikar reconstructs the history of the colonial encounter in the play.

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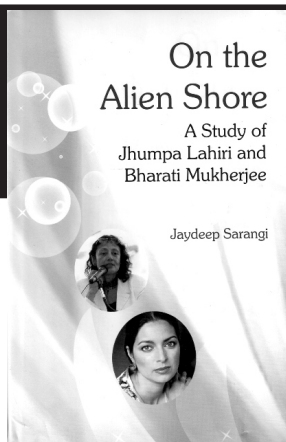
On the Alien Shore

- Jaydeep Sarangi

GNOSIS, New Delhi

First Edition (2010) | Pages: 234

This edited anthology comprising of 18 articles is compiled with a specific objective to trace the continuities of Indian Writing in English and to enrich the critical corpus of Indian English scholarship. The articles aim to expose, evaluate and thus honour the selected Indian diasporic writers and their contribution to Indian English literature.



Mother Courage: Nawal El Saadawi's Heroic Mother as Portrayed in *A Daughter of Isis*

- Anju S Nair

Abstract

Historically and culturally women have been both adaptive and submissive in their negotiations with men and older women. As mothers, women have usually transmitted patriarchal values through parenting, that is, in their negotiations of values with their children. But in recent decades mothers have refused to perpetuate patriarchal values, choosing instead to inculcate more androgynous and autonomous values. When women are more aware of what their really value is, they are less likely to accept the dominance of patriarchal value, instead they become role models for their children/daughters. This paper explores Nawal El Saadawi's relationship with her mother in the novel, *A Daughter of Isis*.

Keywords: inflicted familial affliction, sacrifice, rebel, challenge

Of all the literary forms, In his description of a mother Edward Strecker says, "A mom is a woman whose maternal behaviour is motivated by the seeking of emotional recompense for the buffets which life has dealt her own ego. In her relationship with her children, every deed and almost every breath are designed unconsciously but exclusively to absorb her children emotionally and bind them to her securely" (Strecker 52). This description goes well with Zaynab, mother of Nawal El Saadawi. Writer, Doctor, Feminist and Social activist as she is known today, Saadawi owes all her achievements to her mother Zaynab who played the most significant role in her life especially during her childhood days. It was her mother who first taught her to read and write. The first word Saadawi wrote was her name- Nawal and then she learned her mother's name, Zaynab. "I wrote it down next to mine, her name and mine became inseparable. I loved the way they looked, side by side, and what they meant. Every day she taught me to write new words" (DI 1). Saadawi's relationship with her mother decided the course of her life. What she was to her daughter is well expressed by Lynn Z. Bloom in *Heritages: Dimensions of Mother - Daughter Relationships in Women's Autobiographies*:

The most significant dimension of maternal heritages that offer some answers to these questions are: the nurturing and conveyance of a sense of self; the transmission human values through mothers who serve directly or indirectly, as positive

or negative role models; and the fostering of a group identity – national, racial or cultural. (291)

The evolution of women, into being a literate is the feminist woman's first date with 'Being Complete'. Her primitive state ceases to exist from then on and she now poises a challenge to the already unnerved man with whom she is now en par on the pedestal of literacy and newer challenges. This obviously means fresher defiance that could unnerve him even more. For from there on begins her new status of being invincible.

The day Saadawi became a medical doctor her mother Zaynab “looked like a flower in bloom” (DI 152). Saadawi recalls that moment that gave her mother a feeling of victory. There was sparkle in her eyes as Saadawi recalls,

“I could see them shine as she read through my certificate of graduation.”

May it be a blessing to you Nawal, Dr.Nawal”

I owe it all to you, Mama”

The word Mama burst out of my lips in a gush of suppressed love” (DI 152)

The conventions in her mother's family did not permit expressions of love. So the mother's true feelings were withheld. Saadawi could see in her mother eyes “maternal love burning like a flame but held back, surrounded by a barrier like an iron cast through which it could not break. I, too, behaved in the same way, put up the same barrier like a partition of glass behind which smouldered my emotion” (DI 152). When Saadawi gifts her with a butane stove which was her dream, Zaynab's face became radiant with joy. Saadawi says,

I wanted to put my arms around her, lay my head on her breast and cry. I wanted to let out the tears suppressed within me ever since I had been born. She, too, wanted to put her arms around me to free the feelings of motherhood imprisoned within her for so long. But we stood there unable to embrace one another to exchange a single kiss, separated by barely a finger's breadth of air yet which seemed like a vast ocean, like a thousand years of time which neither of us could cross.(DI 153)

Saadawi traces her mother's childhood to illustrate that Zaynab was not like her siblings. Deep down inside her, were seeds of rebellion. At School she had shown intelligence and did well in class. She had dreams of a different life to that of her mother. Her father was the unquestioned authority at home and this led her to avoid exercising the same kind of authority on her children. She had complete faith in her daughter Nawal of whom she said, “Nawal has wits about her. I trust her. You throw her into the midst of fire and she'll come out unscathed” (DI 156). These words of her mother lifted Saadawi to the heavens. Saadawi could see herself “walking through flames without getting burnt, plunging into the sea and riding over the waves without ever drowning. My mother, not the

outer gentle woman but the real one, would always be there. I might be far away in some distant place, but she would appear at the right moment to save me, exactly how I did not know" (DI 156).

Saadawi's spirits were constructed on the words of her mother and Sadaawi has traversed up a tough journey up to where she is today by the energizing ambience of those words. Those words had deep impact on her. From then on Nawal says she could walk into danger with a brave heart. Had it not been for her mother she would have been trapped in a marriage at the age of ten. Saadawi remembered the sacrifices made by her mother. Her indebtedness towards her mother is evident when she says, "she gave me life and she has given me the revolution ever since I was a child. But a strange man married my grandmother before I was born, affixing his name upon my existence" (MWP 119). Speaking of Zaynab's yearning for education Saadawi says, "She wanted to read and write and change the world, but her day was spent in the kitchen, feeding her nine children and their father". She is typical of the self-sacrificing mom who, "when hard pressed may admit that perhaps she looked 'played out' and is actually a bit tired but she chirps brightly "What of it?" The implication is that she does not care how she looks or feels, for in her heart there is the unselfish joy of service. From dawn until late at night she finds happiness in doing for her children" (Strecker 52). which is in fact a traditionally inflicted familial affliction.

In her family there was hatred in everybody's eyes when Nawal stood up to them. But her mother would feel proud and happy as she watched her daughter fought her battles against them. Her mother made her childhood happy. "Her voice in the stillness of the night was like the voice of God, and her laugh in the morning a ray of sunlight. It made me run towards her, lift my arms up in the air so that she would take me to her breast, and we could play and sing together: 'The sun has risen, a light more beautiful than any light. The shining sun. The smell of my mother's body is part of me, of my body, of its spirit, of the hidden strength I carry within me. She is the voice that speaks to me if something's wrong, rescues me just in time, encourages me in moments of despair" (DI 4).

The importance of a mother's education and attitudes about education for girls is recognized by sociologists of education as critical in the educational achievement of children, particularly girls. Especially when the male Islamic community attempts to deprive the benefits of education to their women it takes not just mental strength but an 'emotional empowerment' to retaliate, wound and yet achieve- in short to be a 'One-Man Majority' than merely accept the usual anodyne of 'facile submissiveness'. It is noteworthy that Saadawi's mother, Zaynab, was the first and most important supporter of her education. Zaynab wanted her to continue her education and become a medical student. She spent her whole life taking care of the nine children and her husband. All the six