

Tess and Devi's Combat with Life for Existence

INDIRA JAVED

ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy and Sarita Mandana have successfully portrayed the die hard desire to combat with life, relations and one's own self in the characters of Tess and Devi. As little rustic girls Tess and Devi grew up in entirely contrasting surroundings. Tess meets Alec accidentally during her fight with another girl on way to D'Urbervilles. Tess is docile, complacent, not able to infer the way of the world. Devi, on the contrary, is a born tigress, with a streak of Coorg wildness. Devi is endowed with typical robust Coorg feminine traits.

Tiger Hills is a passionate story of Devi and her love for Machu. Quite ironically the rape invigorates Devi's life and she strives to achieve an identity in all man's world of coffee plantation. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, however, Tess's struggle to survive against extreme hardship becomes an endless saga of life. Hardy throws Tess into hands of cruel destiny. Tess gets no respite from her family. The vicious circle of odd circumstances and hostile fate dampen Tess's spirits. After a long futile wait for Angel Clare Tess is forced into Alec's arms. She murders Alec. Tess's act seems to be HEROIC. Tess was raped by Alec, just for momentary pleasure. Alec and Angel never seem to suffer little guilt. It is witnessed that Tess suffers mental as well as physical existential crisis. Devi flares in hatred, humiliation and utter hopelessness. Tess's fight seemed to be half-hearted. Devi is, however, enlightened by self-realization and with nobility of forgiveness and reconciliation Mandana raises Devi to great height.

Keywords: rustic, suffering, misfortunes, strength, kill, fate, forgiveness

Literature's universal aspect brings the world in one canvas. It brings continents and people closer, and we begin to identify ourselves with those fictional characters irrespective of regional, national or even international boundaries. Sarita Mandana explores an ocean of relationship psyche in *Tiger Hills*. She has very delicately exhibited multifarious shades of Devi's character who is protagonist of her debut novel *Tiger Hills*. It is a passionate story of Devi and her love for Machu. Mandana has displayed the velour of woman even after facing a failed love relationship. She uncovers the face of women who seek fulfillment through self-expression universally. Interestingly the traces of Coorg culture and character as depicted in Sarita Mandana's *Tiger Hills* and the imprint of rustic ambience of Wessex in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* can prove to be a contrasting study of feminine protagonists. Of course there are some similarities too. Devi and Tess are rustic figures. Both of them go through hell and struggle all their life to regain their identity. For Tess survival is a necessity to keep her alive whereas, for Devi it is a challenge to prove to the society that transforms her into a tigress, in the true sense.

Tess is a sublime figure but has a hamartia that is the fatal weakness. Her journey of life goes through many upheavals. She tries to cope up with her past misgivings but fate, social set up and circumstances join to nullify all her efforts to survive. Tess is a small peasant; she is caught in the wave of capitalist farming leading to exploitation. Devi is a volcano of energy, enthusiasm born to the Nachimanda family as the entity of adulation. She found pleasure in small happenings of day to day life, like crafting wishes with the wings of the luck-bird, storing cowdung, prancing amidst fields and forest. Quite ironically the rape invigorates Devi's life and she strives to achieve an identity in all man's world of coffee plantation. Her determination and hard work earn her the title of a "Coffee queen".

Tess, despite her efforts and hard work, is not able to overcome the crisis in her life. Devi struggles and comes out a winner in the society. "They (Coorg) constitute a highland clan, free from the trammels of caste, with the manly bearing and independent spirit natural... They stride about with the confidence that is most becoming...." (Mandana, 25) Sorrowfully Tess is brought up by irresponsible parents. Tess becomes a breadwinner at a very tender age. She is meek and timid and the pressure of supporting her family crushes her down. Contrastingly, Devi was nurtured with tons of love and affection. She was the princess of the Nachimanda family. The robust Coorg feminine traits were sizably present in Devi. All doted on her. She acquired the attention of all, her father, mother and Tayi. This childhood and family wholesomeness filled her with confidence; therefore, Devi fought the battle of life with great dignity and honour. She did not succumb to the pressure of survival like Tess. "One has to fight for happiness"... (Mandana, 165)

Tess wore the shroud of family responsibility very early in life. With great hope she walks all the way to Tantridge to seek a job, so that she could earn for the family. Tess doesn't have the spark of a fighting human being. Tess is a real epitome of rural innocence who suffers all her life due to a soft heart. Devi had a satiated childhood and teens. She had abundance of love, affection and no scarcity or dearth of anything in life. Her suffering began only after Devanna took away all her freedom, carefree, childlike attitude by raping her. Devi doesn't fight for bread and butter, unlike Tess, she struggles for loss of identity in her life. Her rebellious nature helps her to attain a position and status in life.

Hardy and Mandana have successfully portrayed their protagonists' combating spirits to stand out amidst chaotic situations. The oppressive mechanism of a closed rigid society acts as a catalyst in motivating the rape victim to face

humiliation, torture and negligence. These negatives in life empower the protagonists to fight for survival and sustenance. As little girls Tess and Devi grew up in entirely contrasting surroundings. Tess belongs to a poor family and begins her struggle for existence not only for herself but for her whole family from a very young age. Her mother was not responsible enough to instill some wisdom into Tess about men and wit to face society. Instead Tess's mother puts the idea of marriage with Alec D'Urbervilles into her mind but doesn't teach her the way of the world. Tess meets Alec accidentally during her fight with another girl on way to D'Urbervilles. Alec takes advantage of her disturbed mindset and seduces her. Tess was so young that she tells her mother – "O' mother my mother! How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why did not you tell me there was danger in men folk? Why didn't you warn me?" (Hardy, 104)

The above lines show how much Tess was tormented by the seduction and also that her mother and family had let her go to fight for herself. Later, she has to bear the brunt of being an unmarried mother. The tragic death of the new born baby and the denial of Christian baptism as well as burial multiply the agony and humiliation. There was no one to support or guide her. But as it was the question of her own flesh and blood, Tess gathers courage to baptize the child and also buries the dead child. This horrifying experience weakens her from inside but she moves ahead as she had to work to support her family. While Tess was docile, complacent Devi was a born tigress, with a streak of Coorg wildness. Devi had been nurtured and brought up with great love, affection and attention of the whole Nachimanda clan. She was a princess. Her mother and later Tayi groomed and taught her everything she ought to know. It seems that *Tiger Hills* unlocks with the birth of its heroine – Devi. She augments restless spoiled, pampered and petted by loving parents and doting Tayi. Devi spends a playful, carefree childhood under the care of the family and develops a strong

bond with Devanna. Despite all their dissimilarities in personalities Devi and Devanna gelled together with a stream clear transparency of true friends. "Devanna was content to stay indoor, warming his feet by the fire and playing games of cowrie shells and marbles, but Devi fidgeted non-stop, going time and again to the windows to stare out at the water pelting down, slipping out to the veranda to thrust a hand into the rain despite Muthana's exhortations not to get herself wet." (Mandana, 19) She was never a timid, coy or domestic girl. Tayi was always alarmed by her rebellious nature. Devi was endowed with typical robust Coorg feminine traits.

Devi's encounter with Machu at the legendary 'Tiger Wedding' is the turning point of Devi's life. Although, she begins with criticisms of Tiger wedding and Machu but she falls deeply in love with Machu. Tantalized by his masculinity Devi declares to Tayi "I will marry only Machu". Devanna, in a fit and fury due to an incident of hostel, rushes to Devi and under the influence of alcohol crushes the most valuable asset of Nachimanda family. Devi at the time of rape was in complete adoration and love for Machu. She was blooming in his love, waiting for his vow of celibacy to end. At this juncture of life she is broken completely. The Nachimanda family hurriedly marries Devi to Devanna. This shattering rape shakes Devi completely. Devi flares in hatred, humiliation and utter hopelessness. She turns outrageous and an open rebel. Devanna's futile attempt of suicide and later his disability forces her to move ahead in life never to look back. She exhibits strength and will of a tigress. Thus, adversity becomes a boon and Devi soars high in life unlike Tess to become a business tycoon.

Tess's struggle to survive against extreme hardship becomes an endless saga of life. Very cruelly life denies any happiness to her. It is the beauty of her character that her zeal to combat oddities of life never dies down. Working as a daily maid she meets Angel and he becomes his chosen love mate. Destiny plays

a very harsh game with her, before marrying Angel, Tess wishes to reveal Alec's place in her life to him, but the written confession remains under the doormat. The whole scene becomes topsy-turvy when Angel receives the confession after marriage. Hardy throws Tess into hands of cruel destiny. Tess gets no respite from her family. They have no home to live. The vicious circle of odd circumstances and hostile fate dampen Tess's spirits. Angel leaves from Brazil. He turns out to be more cruel than Alec. He dreams to bargain rustic innocence in Tess at the cost of good fortune, knowledge and when he learns of Tess's past, his dreams are shattered. After a long futile wait for Angel Clare, Tess is forced into Alec's arms. But she takes the extreme step of stabbing Alec, when Angel comes to claim her. As Angel Clare was her first love, she cannot restrain from seeking his love all her life.

It is witnessed that Tess suffers mental as well as physical existential crisis. She is always mobile, uprooted on and off from one place to another. She is not able to connect herself or relate herself to anyone or any place. It was only with Angel that she found some respite that too was very short. Fate and destiny play a very crucial role of punishing Tess very harshly for her innocence and submission. Tess's heroic endurance to her misfortunes, beginning with family crisis, death of the horse, rape, death of a child and its inhuman burial, painful work at the threshing machine, family's eviction of Angel Clare show her courage to find against the upheavals and survive despite being tattered in spirits and emotions. Mandana has very dexterously armed Devi (unlike Hardy's Tess) with exceptional attributes which assist her to fight for distinctiveness as well as economic independence. Tess's fight seemed to be half-hearted. But Devi carries a mountain of stubborn heart full of hatred for Devanna. She puts in all her hatred and storm of anger for Devanna by toiling and laboring hard in the field, fighting valiantly with merciless calamities. Devi's fight with nature is to answer the ill done to her by Devanna when nature became blind and turned a

deaf ear. She slogs, toils and works against all odds to punish her to tease Devanna, to show him that she suffered because of his devilish deed.

She conquers nature's harshness. Devi's hatred for Devanna becomes a driving force in life which enables her to fight and assert her identity. Devi plunges into the struggle for survival to emerge a winner, to attain that identity which Devanna had crushed. Mandana immersed Devi so deep in her combat that she finds no time for wails and sobs. She very aptly remarks to Tayi "In this life, if one is not strong people will trample you underfoot. One has to fight for happiness, for one's dues..." (Mandana, 231) It is with hard labour, distinguished achievements and unflinching courage that Devi earns the title of 'Coffee Queen'. She explores and emerges victorious in male dominated world. Sarita Mandana and Hardy place their protagonists in a very contrasting pedestal in life. Mandana endows Devi with indomitable strength, potential and dimensions. Devi shares the divinity and grace of Goddess Kaveri who like Devi was vivacious, free spirited and dynamic. Devi feeds her hatred for Devanna and it gives her energy to pave her path in life. First, she rebels by continuing relation with Machu, her love for Machu is the second pillar of strength that enables her to fight every hurdle. Hatred and love, the two contrasting emotions become the weapon for Devi to protect her and strengthen her. Second, Devi is blessed to transform her anger and humiliation within her to use it as a constructive resourceful energy, with which she becomes owner of Big Business Empire. Devanna couldn't possess her, very rightly Mandana remarks, "unfettered, unbound," (Mandana, 163) so Devi was.

Hardy on the other hand makes Tess a puppet in the hands of Fate and Destiny. More so, Tess is not given strength, power and wit. She is not weak; she is steadfast and shows unfaltering devotion to her family. Basically, Tess is by nature a melancholic

person. She was never happy with life even before any misfortune descended upon her. Unlike Devi, Tess is all the time haunted by a sense of guilt. It is because of this consistent guilt she puts off Angel every time he proposes her. It seems that Tess was not willing to be happy in life. The misfortunes in Tess's life make her a truly tragic figure. Continuity of misfortunes and tragedy enable her to stand up on her feet. Although Tess proves herself to be a woman with an exceptional capacity for love and for self-sacrifice she has life of despair, hard toil, helplessness and mental torture. The wrecking of Tess's happiness and the blighting of her hopes are unbearable for the reader but, Tess endures her fate with a rare fortitude. Tess remains the most lovable of Hardy's heroines. Hardy writes the way in which men can dominate women, exerting power that is linked to their maleness. By raping Tess Alec acknowledges how mean he is. This act of Alec exhibits male dominance over a female just for momentary pleasure. This becomes the life-altering act in Tess's life.

Angel substitutes an idealized picture of Tess's country purity for the real life woman that he continually refuses to know. When Angel calls Tess names like "Daughter of Nature" and "Artemis ", we feel that he may be denying her true self in favor of a mental image that he prefers. Consequently, her identity is suppressed, albeit unknowingly. A reversal in the novel occurs when Tess murders Alec. This act of Tess shows her rebellion against male dominance and the personal justice which she gives to herself. Although it was utterly wrong socially. Tess's act seems to be HEROIC. This she does solely for herself.

But Sarita Mandana uplifts Devi. All her life Devi rears and nurtures her hatred for Devanna which gives her inner strength in her voyage of life. After the rape she adopts and assimilates tactics painstakingly to replenish her new being. Although she is emotionally dislocated, she gathers herself to overcome the cultural and social dilemma. Devi's suffering is elevated after she

meets Dr. Rama Swamy who narrates Devanna's hellish experience of ragging at Bangalore hostel. How after Martin slaughtered his pet given by Devi to him and the act of sodomy displaced Devanna and under the influence of alcohol he had raped Devi.

Tess was raped by Alec, just for momentary pleasure. Her blooming life was crushed in the hands of destiny. Alec and Angel never seem to suffer little guilt. Tess suffers for no fault of hers. Sarita Mandana makes Devi pay for the wrong done by Devanna. Why did Devanna found solace after raping his childhood friend? In both the incidents of *Tess* and *Tiger Hills* it is observed that woman suffers the wrath of man which in turn destroys her life. For Alec it was fun for Devanna it was revenge for the wrong done to him by Martin. But he punishes Devi. Why the fate and destiny of a woman was and is still in the hands of so called feebly mighty MEN?

Mandana enriches Devi's character by endowing her with typical feminine trait of forgiveness. Tayi's words echo in her ears, "Forgive him "kunyi", he has suffered too... Do not be the tree that can bear no fruit but be the jungle orchid that perfumes the wind". (Mandana, 448) Devi is enlightened by self-realization and with nobility of forgiveness and reconciliation Mandana raises Devi to great height.

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**Nostalgia, Passion and Modernity: A Critical Reading
of KV Raghupathi's Three Select Poems:
"Steam Engine", "July 14, 2013" and
"Ode to My Cycle"**

K. NARESH, G. HAMPAMMA & V.B.CHITRA

K.V. Raghupathi is a leading voice in the contemporary Indian Poetry in English. His poetry is known for striking imagery. He believes that the free flow of feelings have no set of rules. For him poetry is beyond all material rules. Poets are different from others. They can poeticize ordinary things in an extraordinary way with their creative powers. He fulfils this idea by glorifying the steam engine, by singing a dirge over the death of Telegram, and by developing an emotional attachment with a bicycle. His three poems "Steam Engine," "July 14, 2013" and "Ode to my Cycle" taken from his tenth poetry collection *Between Me and the Babe* (2014) for analysis capture and represent the zeitgeist of his times. The steam engine, the telegraph, the bicycle, automobiles and many other inventions saw the light during the Industrial Revolution. Industrial revolution has transformed our agricultural society into an industrial society. These tools have really played a vital role in transforming the transportation and communication of man. As APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India said that in the 21st century a new kind of transformation would take place due to efficient utilization of knowledge. Now the global scenario shows that the world is striving towards the knowledge society. Due to the advent of modern technology progress has gained momentum and it is

rapidly changing the world into a knowledge society much faster than we think. Consequently the things that extended their services to humanity once have now lost their glory.

“Steam Engine” is a small beautiful poem of reminiscence. The poem offers a chance to look back at the greatest inventions that have transformed the human civilization. Each invention is a milestone in the history of man. The Industrial Revolution got its pace due to the invention of many such machines. The life of man was so laborious and he had to toil for everything before Industrial Revolution. The transport was mainly on foot, carts, stagecoaches, but it was too slow to reach destinations. Messages and telegrams were sent by doves and by small horses and some travelled by boats and for this it had taken days, weeks sometimes months to reach their destinations. Everything was worse and adverse until the era of the Industrial Revolution had taken place. When the Industrial Revolution started many inventions came in light which brought great success. This had led to the age of imperialism and colonization.

The steam engine was invented by Newcomons and it was eventually modified into a steam boat by Robert Fulton. Newcomon’s steam engine was sealed in 1765. In the same year James Watt, a Scottish mechanic, was asked to repair a model of a Newcomon steam engine. Watt was perplexed by the huge amount of steam consumed by Newcomen’s machine and began a remedy for its inefficiency. The first generation steam engines consumed coal. In early 1720s many steam engines were in operation. A steam engine that was first developed in the Great Britain in the early 19th century and served until middle of the 20th century. But the early 1930s the second Industrial Revolution was started with the new scientific knowledge which applied to the industry by scientists and engineers for unlocking the secrets of physics and chemistry. The modern industries were established and steel, chemicals, and petroleum benefited from the new understandings of chemistry. In the second Industrial

Revolution the steam engines were gradually replaced by diesel and electric trains beginning from the 1930s.

In the poem the sight of steam engine stationed in front of the *Rail Nilayam* at Secunderabad unearthed the buried memories in sub-consciousness of the poet which in turn flowed freely into a verse with dense imagery. The poem has a unique structure with six stanzas that obviously and metaphorically refer to the six wheels of the steam engine. The poet in the first stanza introduces the steam engine which stands as a mute witness of changes that shaped the world. The poet becomes nostalgic and recollects the glorious past it had and its present status in simple words and images. He employs personification in the very first stanza where the steam engine is presented as a witness to the changes that are happening around the world. The poet further says that it had life once. It moved on six wheels on either side as the coal burned in its womb. The steam engine that stands motionless today was once teeming with full of life, says the poet:

It had a life
with coal burning in its womb ever
with six wheels on either sides in clock and anti-clock wise. (20)

The steam engine serves as a flash back and takes the poet to his childhood days. The poet attributes life even to the toy train he had in his childhood that was small life. In his childhood days the poet was fascinated with its movements. He recalls the pranks he had with it along with his friends and their joy knew no bounds.

I played back and forth
as the wheels screeched on the track. (20)

The poem reveals the glorious life the steam engine once had. It was not affected by seasons and it did not change its flow. It ran on in all seasons. It transported thousands of people every day in carriages hauled by it in spite of rain or chill or heat.

In monsoon it never cooled.
In winter it never rested with burning coal ever.
In its hooting and chucking on the track
it transported thousands every day
with their faces smudged. (20)

It was always on the track hooting and chucking through dreadful silence in the dark deep dense forests. The alliteration and imagery used in the poem is striking. It moved unmindful of its fate as the new inventions have brought its natural death.

It passed through dreadful silence
in the dark deep dense forests
hissing and hooting and spilling vapour and sparks. (20)

The poet tells that the retirement is inevitable for anything. Men had never anticipated changes and the steam engine had succumbed to the changes that pronounced “death on its life.” The coal that once burnt to give life to the steam engine has now been burnt to ashes and the steam evaporated. Now it stands as hallow in front of the Rail Nilayam. Here the poet once again puts us back on the wheels of life which never ceases. It is Nature’s fundamental law that which is born is bound to die one day, whether born in nature or man-made. The poet applies this law even to machines which are not exempted. The Soul may change its form but never perishes as the Upanishads say. Though the steam engine has become outdated and has ceased to function, its spirit of motion is carried on by some other new version of machines. Hence the poet says.

But life’s wheels never ceased
with no fears on the track. (21)

Finally the steam engine serves as a refrain. The poet personified the steam engine in the first stanza as mute witness is further extended philosophically that it witnessed the whimsical changes in the garden of life.

The steam engine stands as a mute witness
looking at the whimsical changes in the garden of life. (21)

With brevity of words the poet concludes that life happens like that. It matters nothing in the passage of life. Old is always replaced with new things. That is the truth of life that we come to learn at the end of the poem.

In "July 14, 2013" the poet narrates how the click-clack instrument, the Telegram, one of India's old communication services has officially stopped functioning. People generally express their sorrow at the demise of an object and then forget. But the poet in the poem draws great inspiration out of it. For poets everything is a source of inspiration and joy, whether animate or inanimate; they do not distinguish. On July 14, 2013 the poet listens to the broadcast news of the death of the telegram pronounced by the Minister. Life is brief and no one can escape the pangs of death.

Today, that is, July 14, 2013 at 5 p.m.
the click-clack instrument that sang for six hundred and
fifty two seasons
the poetry of life and death uninterruptedly
shall cease to sing forever.(45)

The instrument that sang for "six hundred and fifty two seasons" ceased permanently. It represents both life and death with its good and bad news. Now the poetry of life and death ceases forever. It will never sing the poetry of life and death in future, the poet laments. The telegraph was invented by Samuel Morse and he also created the Morse code named after his name. The Morse code is a set of dots and lines it has a code each one. The telegraph was made it possible to send messages over sea which made a lot of improvement to communication between people. Before the telegraph was invented, communication between countries and people was difficult and the invention of the telegraph made communication ease across the nations of the world. The telegraph made messaging easier. It played a key role

in communication between countries and between people, particularly in sending messages over sea.

The poet notices in his youth that how it has brought joy and celebration to the millions across plains and mountains with messages like job selection, marriage, birth etc. The poet also recollects how it created tremors from *muladhara chakra* to *ajna chakra*. He recreates the milieu and ethos of those days.

It had brought to millions across plains and mountains
with the messages of job selection, marriage, birth. (45)

The poet recounts how men in ordinary dress knocked the doors in odd hours to handover the death messages for 163 years. Ironically the instrument that communicated both happy and death messages for 163 years had to die. The Death pronouncing death on it is poignant. Death dying in death is personified as well as aphorised.

What an irony –
Death died in death! (45)

At every telegram center people stood in long queues to send their last telegram to mark the last day of service at BSNL Head office on July 14, 2013. As the time of demise of telegram was seventeen hours a telegram arrived at poets' home town and it carried only four words: "*Happy death to Telegram*". That was the end of life of telegram, eternally put to rest, wishing it a happy ending. The poet ends his nostalgia with a philosophical note – Life is as simple, brief, and as grave as telegram. Finally, the poet pays his tributes in his farewell to the telegram by wishing that it may rest peacefully in the lap of man's wonders. The telegram always was grave and recalling the brevity of life.

Adieu, I can never see you.
May you rest peacefully in the lap of man's wonders? (46)

"*Ode to my Cycle*" is yet another poem of reminiscence. His musings of his old cycle are thoroughly depicted not in a conventional ode form, though the poet titled it as 'Ode to my

Cycle'. The poet's close association with a fine Hercules is beautifully recounted in this poem with a sense of nostalgia and pain. The invention of bicycle has shown an enormous effect on society, both on culture and advancing modern technologies and also both on men and women. In this poem the poet points out how man discards a bicycle for reviving new stylized life. His father used it for eight years, the poet records, and later it was transferred to him. There are two stanzas in the poem like two wheels of the cycle. The first stanza contains his graphical description of this old cycle. The second stanza shows the shift and change of attitude in the poet to cope with the modern needs. The poem begins with the description, sixteen summers means sixteen years which he peddled it like a lone tiller in lone world. The use of simile is appropriate, suggesting obviously that the poet's cycle is inappropriately rendered in the modern context dominated by technology. The poet used summers and winters instead of years to give a pleasant touch to the poetic description. Here he mentions the exact year 1982 in which he inherited it from his father with no price.

'A fine Hercules bicycle with no gears', which was gifted to him by his father who had used it for eight years. He personifies it as a living being that was with his father. Then he compares it to the pet dog. The poet has taken care of the cycle for sixteen years and he kept it like a treasured gift. Like a pet dog it was nurtured, and it in turn nurtured the poet. And it took him round like a sweet soul with a fresh feeling of everyday morning. It took the poet on different types of roads in all seasons. It was pedaled on sizzling roads, escarpments, bridges bushes and brambles.

rode upon sizzling roads, escarpment,
bridges, bushes, brambles
in spring, summer, autumn, winter
regardless of grammar of the earth. (52)

It moved along in spring, winter, summer and autumn. The poet loved its sounds – its clinking bell, creaking of the breaks, screeching sound of the wheels. When pedaled spokes were invisible. The poet here introduces the concept of *Maya*, the central doctrine of *Advaita* philosophy.

I loved the clinking, creaking, screeching
and the disappearance of spokes like *maya*. (52)

The action of the cycle is beautifully captured by the poet in its description – scuttering pebbles, stones, mud balls under the wheels. It moved left and right left and right like the clauses and phrases. The simile is striking. The poet tendered it carefully as if it were a baby for him – greased, oiled, washed, and repaired it like a physician for sixteen years as he treated it as a precious gift.

greased, oiled, washed, repaired
like a physician for sixteen summers. (52)

At last the poet realized its inability to meet the challenges of the changing times and one day he goes to a mechanic with it and sells it for a “fabulous price” to trim his life to catch the momentum of the world. Speed is the mantra of the modern society. To embrace this speed the poet sold away the cycle, which had served both his father and him for 24 years to buy a motor bike.

To trim my life faster
To the spattered roads with purring and whirring (52)

The close affinity and deep attachment with the cycle was inseparable. Though the poet parted with it, it remained strong in his subconscious. Notwithstanding its irresistible temptations, the poet has penned it in the form of a poem, more as a tribute to the object than the object itself. The communion of the poet with the cycle is highly poetic. Its wheels still sing in his memory like humming birds. Years have passed by like the rotations of a wheel but the wheels of the discarded cycle:

still sing in my (his) memory like a humming bird (52)

The poet presents Steam Engine, Bicycle and The Telegraph as the victims of newer inventions and changes of life. Though steam engine and the telegraph faded and were erased from public memory, bicycle has survived the onslaughts of the time. It is still used by a common man. It is mostly a common man's medium of transport. The poet first narrated the glory of the first generation trains that ran with the help of steam engines, the telegram that nurtured communication across the seas and the bicycle that served the poet for long and then shows how these have succumbed to the changing times and passions. He traces the affinity of life and death of these machines with the life and death of man. Indeed they shaped human life and destiny. Though they are lifeless machines they did wonders for man. Thus, in the three poems the poet celebrates the glorious past associated with them by recollecting his association with them while paying rich tribute at the same time.

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