

Reflections

(B.A. Ist Year)

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Preface

Language learning and study of literature are two facets of learning which should be embedded in the system of education. Without a study of literature, language learning is incomplete. Hence, a study of some of the representative pieces of poetry, prose, short stories, critical appreciations and others needs to be undertaken. Karnataka Samskrit University imparts specialized Samskrit education. However, this does not happen in isolation. Study of Kannada and English literature is also prescribed in undergraduate courses. Hence, there was an urgent need of a textbook, which takes into account various dimensions of English literature. It is a matter of pride and pleasure that Karnataka Samskrit University is bringing out this text-book of English with this view.

The present text-book comprises of many good literary works, which when studied and mastered, make a student appreciate English literature and language. Book One comprises of short prose and poetry, both by Indian and Western authors. Older forms of poetry like sonnets are also introduced to the student in this book. Book Two comprises of about ten chapters. 'Shooting an Elephant' and etc. are essays which develop critical and logical thinking. The student is exposed to different styles of English prose. Satirical and comedy pieces followed by critical essays, poetry etc. are introduced in a novel way. There are special exercises on Functional Grammar and grammatical elements.

I congratulate the Editorial board for bringing out these two volumes which are most needed to students. I thank noted critic Dr. N. Manu Chakravarthy who has edited these volumes. I offer

my thanks to Dr. Vinay P. for assistance in editing. Dr. Veerananarayana N.K. Pandurangi, Director of Adhyayananga took pains in arranging the compilation and printing of these volumes. I thank all the persons who worked for this book.

The choice of literary material is also most praise-worthy. I wish that these books help instil an appreciation for English literature and also produce interest for further study.

Prof. Padma Shekhar
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Contents

1. On Ahimsa by M.K. Gandhi	7
2. The Kabuliwallah by Rabindranath Tagore	14
3. ' Javni ' by Raja Rao	26
4. Toba Tek Singh by Sadat Hasan Manto	48
5. "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov	57
6. The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare	68
7. A Poison Tree by William Blake	97
8. A Slumber did my Spirit Seal by William Wordsworth	101
9. On his blindness by John Milton	103
10. Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds by William Shakespeare	106
Functional Grammar	108

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On Ahimsa

Summary

In 1916, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Lala Lajpat Rai, who had not yet become a fervid adherent of the policy of non-violence, were debating the principles of ahimsa. That year, more than a decade before Rai led a peaceful protest in Lahore against the Simon Commission, he took issue with one of the speeches given by Gandhi, who had recently returned home from South Africa.

In an article that was published in July 1916, Rai wrote that the elevation of ahimsa to the highest doctrine had led to the downfall of India. This article was published in the *Modern Review*, a Calcutta-based journal of opinion that was founded by the Bengali thinker and reformist Ramananda Chatterjee in 1907. The historian Ramchandra Guha has described the *Modern Review* as "the first Indian equivalent of *Les Temps Moderne*, the *New Statesman* and *The Nation*." The journal-which emerged as a vital platform for debates on nationalism, history and society-counted among its contributors Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Premchand, Verrier Elwin, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and CF Andrews.

Patriots, Poets and Prisoners, an anthology of essays published in the *Modern Review* from 1906 to 1947, captures some of the debates surrounding the nationalist movement. In this excerpt,

Gandhi responds to Rai's critique, reminding us of the evils of violence, noting that one's "love of the cow or the country is a vague thing intended to satisfy one's vanity or soothe a stinging conscience."

(Courtesy: <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/gandhi-defended-non-violence-lala-lajpat-rai>)

About the Author

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 - 30 January 1948) was the leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule. Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahatma (Sanskrit: "high-souled", "venerable")-applied to him first in 1914 in South Africa is now used worldwide. In India, he is also called Bapu (Gujarati: endearment for father, papa) and Gandhiji. He is unofficially called the Father of the Nation.

Born and raised in a Hindu merchant family in coastal Gujarat, India, and trained in law at the Inner Temple, London, Gandhi first employed nonviolent civil disobedience as an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, in the resident Indian community's struggle for civil rights. After his return to India in 1915, he set about organising peasants, farmers, and urban labourers to protest against excessive land-tax and discrimination. Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns for various social causes and for achieving Swaraj or self-rule.

Gandhi famously led Indians in challenging the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km (250 mi) Dandi Salt March in 1930, and later in calling for the British to Quit India in 1942. He was imprisoned for many years, upon many occasions, in both

South Africa and India. He lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community and wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn hand-spun on a charkha. He ate simple vegetarian food, and also undertook long fasts as a means of both self-purification and political protest.

Gandhi's vision of an independent India based on religious pluralism, however, was challenged in the early 1940s by a new Muslim nationalism which was demanding a separate Muslim homeland carved out of India. Eventually, in August 1947, Britain granted independence, but the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two dominions, a Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. As many displaced Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs made their way to their new lands, communal violence broke out, especially in the Punjab and Bengal. Eschewing the official celebration of independence in Delhi, Gandhi visited the affected areas, attempting to provide solace. In the months following, he undertook several fasts unto death to stop communal violence. The last of these, undertaken on 12 January 1948 when he was 78, also had the indirect goal of pressuring India to pay out some cash assets owed to Pakistan. Some Indians thought Gandhi was too accommodating. Among them was Nathuram Godse, who assassinated Gandhi on 30 January 1948 by firing three bullets into his chest. Captured along with many of his co-conspirators and collaborators, Godse and his co-conspirator Narayan Apte were tried, convicted and executed while many of their other accomplices were awarded prison sentences.

Gandhi's birthday, 2 October, is commemorated in India as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Nonviolence.

Courtesy: Wikipedia

On Ahimsa

Had Lala Lajpat Rai first ascertained what I had actually said on ahimsa, his remarks in *The Modern Review* for last July would not have seen the light of day. Lala-ji rightly questioned whether I actually made the statements imputed to me. He says, that if I did not, I should have contradicted them. In the first place, I have not yet seen the papers which have reported the remarks in question or those wherein my remarks were criticised. Secondly, I must confess that I would not undertake to correct all the errors that creep into reports that appear in the public press about my speeches.

Lala-ji's article has been much quoted in the Gujarati newspapers and magazines; and it is perhaps as well for me to explain my position. With due deference to Lala-ji, I must join issue with him when he says that the elevation of the doctrine of ahimsa to the highest position contributed to the downfall of India. There seems to be no historical warrant for the belief that an exaggerated practice of ahimsa synchronised with our becoming bereft of many virtues. During the past fifteen hundred years, we have as a nation given ample proof of physical courage, but we have been torn by internal dissensions and have been dominated by love of self instead of love of country. We have, that is to say, been swayed by the spirit of irreligion rather than of religion.

I do not know how far the charge of unmanliness can be made good against the Jains. I hold no brief for them. By birth I am a Vaishnavite, and was taught ahimsa in my childhood. I have derived much religious benefit from Jain religious works, as I have from scriptures of the other great faiths of the world. I owe much to the living company of the deceased philosopher Raja Chand Kavi who was a Jain by birth. Thus though my views on ahimsa are a result of my study of most of the faiths of the world, they are now no longer dependent upon the authority of these works. They are a

part of my life and if I suddenly discovered that the religious books read by me bore a different interpretation from the one I had learnt to give them, I should still hold to the view of ahimsa as I am about to set forth here. Our shastras seem to teach that a man who really practises ahimsa in its fullness has the world at his feet, he so affects his surroundings that even the snakes and other venomous reptiles do him no harm. This is said to have been the experience of Saint Francis of Assisi.

In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind. I may not therefore hurt the person of any wrongdoer, or bear any ill will to him and so cause him mental suffering. This statement does not cover suffering caused to the wrong-doer by natural acts of mine which do not proceed from ill will. It, therefore, does not prevent me from withdrawing from his presence a child whom he, we shall imagine, is about to strike. Indeed the proper practice of ahimsa required me to withdraw the intended victim from the wrong-doer, if I am in any way whatsoever the guardian of such a child. It was therefore most proper for the passive resisters of South Africa to have resisted the evil that the Union Government sought to do to them. They bore no ill will to it. They showed this by helping the Government whenever it needed their help.

Their resistance consisted of disobedience of the orders of the Government, even to the extent of suffering death at their hands. Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer.

In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. A man cannot deceive the loved ones; he does not fear or frighten him or her.

(Gift of life) is the greatest of all gifts. A man who gives it in reality disarms all hostility. He has paved the way for an honourable understanding. And none who is himself subject to fear can bestow that gift. He must therefore be himself fearless. A man cannot then practise ahimsa and be a coward at the same time. The practice of ahimsa calls forth the greatest courage. It is the most soldierly of a soldier's virtues. General Gordon has been represented in a famous statue as bearing only a stick. This takes us far on the road to ahimsa.

But a soldier, who needs the protection of even a stick, is to that extent so much the less a soldier. He is the true soldier who knows how to die and stand his ground in the midst of a hail of bullets. Such a one was Ambarish who stood his ground without lifting a finger, though Durvasa did his worst. The Moors, who were being powdered by the French gunners, rushed into the guns' mouth with 'Allah' on their lips, showed much the same type of courage. Only theirs was the courage of desperation. Ambarish's was due to love. Yet the Moorish valour, readiness to die, conquered the gunners. They frantically waved their hats, ceased firing and greeted their erstwhile enemies as comrades. And so the South African passive resisters in their thousands were ready to die rather than sell their honour for a little personal ease. This was ahimsa in its active form. It never barter away honour. A helpless girl in the hands of a follower of ahimsa finds better and surer protection than in the hands of one who is prepared to defend her only to the point to which his weapons would carry him.

The tyrant, in the first instance, will have to walk to his victim over the dead body of her defender, in the second, he has but to overpower the defender, for it is assumed that the canon of propriety in the second instance will be satisfied when the defender has fought to the extent of his physical valour. In the first instance, as the defender has matched his very soul against the mere body of the tyrant, the odds are that the soul in the latter will be awakened, and

the girl will stand an infinitely greater chance of her honour being protected than in any other conceivable circumstance - barring, of course, that of her own personal courage.

If we are unmanly today, we are so, not because we do not know how to strike, but because we fear to die. He is no follower of Mahavira, the apostle of Jainism, or of Buddha or of the Vedas, who being afraid to die, takes flight before any danger, real or imaginary all the while wishing that somebody else would remove the danger by destroying the person causing it. He is no follower of ahimsa (I agree with Lala-ji) who does not care a straw if he kills a man by inches by deceiving him in trade, or who will protect by force of arms a few cows and make away with the butcher, or who in order to do a supposed good to his country does not mind killing off a few officials.

All these are actuated by hatred, cowardice and fear. Her love of the cow or the country is a vague thing intended to satisfy one's vanity or soothe a stinging conscience. Ahimsa, truly understood, is, in my humble opinion, a panacea for all evils mundane and extra-mundane. We can never overdo it. Just at present, we are not doing it at all. Ahimsa does not displace the practice of other virtues, but renders their practice imperatively necessary before it can be practiced even in its rudiments. Lala-ji need not fear the ahimsa of his father's faith. Mahavira and Buddha were soldiers, and so was Tolstoy. Only they saw deeper and truer in their profession, and found the secret of a true, happy, honourable and godly life. Let us be joint sharers with these teachers and this land of ours will once more be the abode of gods.

Excerpted from Patriots, Poets and Prisoners: Selections from Ramananda Chatterjee's *The Modern Review*, 1907-1947, published by Harper Collins India.

The Kabuliwallah

Summary:

The Kabuliwallah is from Kabul. His real name is Abdur Rahman. He works as a peddler in India. He goes to Kabul once a year to visit his wife and little daughter. In the course of selling goods, once he reaches the house of the writer, Rabindranath Tagore. Then his Five year old daughter, Mini calls him 'Kabuliwallah! A Kabuliwallah'. When Kabuliwallah goes to visit Mini she is afraid because he is wearing loose soiled clothes and a tall turban. He looks gigantic. When the writer knows that Mini is afraid, he introduces her to him. The Kabuliwallah gives her some nuts and raisins. Mini is happy and from the next day, the Kabuliwallah often visits her and he gives her something to eat. They crack jokes and laugh and enjoy themselves. They also feel comfortable in the company of each other. The writer likes their friendship. But Mini's mother doesn't like it. She thinks that a peddler like Kabuliwallah can be a child lifter. However, Mini and the Kabuliwallah become intimate friends.

The Kabuliwallah sells seasonal goods. Once he sells a Rampuri shawl to a customer on credit. He asks him for the money many times but he doesn't pay. At last he denies buying the shawl. The Kabuliwallah becomes very angry and stabs the customer. He is arrested by the police and taken to jail. He is jailed for eight years.

When he is freed from jail the first thing he does is he goes to visit Mini. It is her wedding day and he isn't allowed to visit her. When he shows a piece of paper to the writer, he permits him to meet Mini who is in her wedding dress. The writer knows that the Kabuliwallah has no money to go back to his house so the writer curtails the wedding expenses and gives one hundred rupees to the Kabuliwallah and sends him back to Kabul.

Courtesy: <https://schoolworkhelper.net/rabindranath-tagores-the-cabuliwallah-summary-analysis/>

About the Author

Rabindranath Tagore also written Ravindranatha Thakura (7 May 1861 - 7 August 1941), sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Author of Gitanjali and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became in 1913 the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Tagore's poetic songs were viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside Bengal. He is sometimes referred to as "the Bard of Bengal".

A Pirali Brahmin from Calcutta with ancestral gentry roots in Jessore, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At the age of sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhanusimha ("Sun Lion"), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. By 1877 he graduated to his first short stories and dramas, published under his real name. As a humanist, universalist, internationalist, and ardent nationalist, he denounced the British Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds

of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy also endures in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

Tagore modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke on topics political and personal. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced) and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed-or panned-for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India's *Jana Gana Mana* and Bangladesh's *Amar Shonar Bangla*. The Sri Lankan national anthem was inspired by his work.

Courtesy: Wikipedia

The Kabuliwallah

Rabindranath Tagore

My five-year-old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would like to stop her prattle, but I would not. For Mini to be quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said: "Father! Ramdayal, the door-keeper, calls a kak a kauwa!

He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the difference between one language and another in this world, she had embarked on the full

tide of another subject. "What do you think, Father? Bhola says there is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!"

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still, trying to think of some reply to this: "Father! what relation is mother to you?"

With a grave face I contrived to say: "Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!"

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was hard at work on my seventeenth chapter, in which Pratap Singh, the hero, has just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and is about to escape with her by the third storey window of the castle, when suddenly Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying: "A Kabuliwallah! A Kabuliwallah!" And indeed, in the street below, there was a Kabuliwallah, walking slowly along. He wore the loose, soiled clothing of his people, and a tall turban; he carried a bag on his back, and boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what my daughter's feelings were when she saw this man, but she began to call him loudly. "Ah!" thought I, "he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!" At that very moment the Kabuliwallah turned, and looked up at the child. When she saw this, she was overcome by terror, and running to her mother's protection disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The peddler meanwhile entered my doorway and greeted me with a smile.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first impulse was to stop and buy something, since Mini had called the man to the house. I made some small purchases, and we began to talk about Abdur Rahman, the Russians, the English, and the Frontier Policy.

As he was about to leave, he asked: "And where is the little girl, Sir?"

And then, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, I had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Kabuliwallah and his bag. He offered her nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

A few mornings later, however, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Kabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little sari was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor. "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna piece, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and put it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return, an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Kabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother, catching sight of the bright round object, had pounced on the child with: "Where did you get that eight-anna piece?"

"The Kabuliwallah gave it to me!" said Mini cheerfully.

"The Kabuliwallah gave it to you!" cried her mother greatly shocked, "O Mini! How could you take it from him?"

I entered at the moment, and saving her from impending disaster, proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or the second time, I found, that the two had met. The Kabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by

a judicious bribe of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which amused them greatly. Mini would seat herself before him, look down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, and with her face rippling with laughter would begin: "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah: What have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accent of the mountaineer: "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps: but how they both enjoyed the fun! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Kabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: "Well, little one, and when are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

Now nearly every small Bengali maiden had heard long ago about her father-in-law's house; but we were a little new-fangled, and had kept these things from our child, so that Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied: "Are you going there?"

Amongst men of the Kabuliwallah's class, however, it is well known that the words father-in-law's house have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for jail, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy peddler take my daughter's question. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman. "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this, and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest, and I without stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the

whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams—the mountains, the glens, and the forests of his distant land, with his cottage in their midst and the free and independent life, or far away wilds. Perhaps scenes of travel are conjured up before me and pass and re-pass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead an existence so like a vegetable that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt. In the presence of this Kabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbaned merchants, some carrying their queer old firearms, and some their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see_. But at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, and implore me to "beware of that man."

Mini's mother is unfortunately very timid. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria, or cockroaches, or caterpillars. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Kabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.

If I tried to laugh her fear gently away, she would turn round seriously, and ask me solemn questions:

Were children never kidnapped?

Was it not true that there was slavery in Kabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?

I urged that, though not impossible, it was very improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. But as it was a

very vague dread, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year, in the middle of January, Rahman, the Kabuliwallah, used to return to his own country, and as the time approached, he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It might have seemed to a stranger that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented man laden with his bags, in the corner of a dark room; but when Mini ran in smiling, with her "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah" and the two friends, so far apart in age, subsided into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting proof-sheets in my study. The weather was chilly. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was nearly eight o'clock, and early pedestrians were returning home with their heads covered. Suddenly I heard an uproar in the street, and looking out saw Rahman being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of inquisitive boys. There were blood-stains on his clothes, and one of the policemen carried a knife. I hurried out, and stopping them, inquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the peddler something for a Rampuri shawl, but had denied buying it, and that in the course of the quarrel Rahman had struck him. Now, in his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" Rahman's face lighted up as he turned to her. He

had no bag under his arm today, so that she could not talk about the elephant with him. She therefore at once proceeded to the next question: "Are you going to your father-in-law's house?" Rahman laughed and said: "That is just where I am going, little one!" Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands, "Ah!" he said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahman was sentenced to several years' imprisonment.

Time passed, and he was forgotten. Our accustomed work in the accustomed place went on, and the thought of the once free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with girls. So much, indeed, did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room, so that I rarely had any opportunity of speaking to her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn, and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays. With Durga returning to Kailas, the light of our home also would depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, it seemed as though the air had been washed clean and the rays of the sun looked like pure gold. So bright were they, that they made even the sordid brick-walls of our Calcutta lanes radiant. Since early dawn the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each burst of sound my own heart throbbed. The wail of the tune, Bhairavi, seemed to intensify the pain I felt at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married that night.

From early morning, noise and bustle had pervaded the house.

In the courtyard there was the canopy to be slung on its bamboo poles; there were chandeliers with their tinkling sound to be hung in each room and verandah. There was endless hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when someone entered, saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahman, the Kabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He carried no bag, his long hair was cut short and his old vigour seemed to have gone. But he smiled; and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahman?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harshly upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow-man, and my heart shrank within itself when I realised this; for I felt that the day would have been better-omened had he not appeared.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Perhaps you could come another day?"

He immediately turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said, "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used to do, calling, "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. Indeed, in memory of former days, he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow or other from a countryman; for what little money he had, had gone.

I repeated: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see anyone today."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, then said, "Good morning," and went out.

I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back but I found

he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me and held out his offerings with the words: "I have brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?"

I took them, and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand, and said: "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your memory. Do not offer me money! You have a little girl. I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring this fruit to your child, not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. Unfolding it with great care, he smoothened it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. Merely the impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of the hand of his own little daughter he had carried always next to his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Kabuli fruit-seller, while I was. But no, what was I more than he? He also was a father.

That impression of the hand of his little Parvati in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I swept them aside. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood modestly before me.

The Kabuliwallah seemed amazed at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-

in-law," and she could not answer him as of old. She blushed at the question, and stood before him with her head bowed down.

I remembered the day when the Kabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahman sighed deeply and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown up, while he had been away so long, and that he would have to make friends anew with her also. Assuredly he would not find her as she was when he left her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded and the mild autumn sunlight streamed round us. But Rahman, standing in our narrow Calcutta lane, saw in his mind's eye the mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a hundred rupee note, gave it to him, and said: "Go back to your daughter, Rahman, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!"

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent about it. But to me the wedding feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father was going to meet again his only child.

'Javni'

Summary

'Javni'--- a critical Appreciation.

'Javni', is a heartrending story by Raja Rao whose writings are ranked as finest of Indian works in English.

'Javni' is the tale of a poor and illiterate woman who belongs to the low caste of washerman in a remote village of Karnataka. She serves as a domestic help in the house of a revenue inspector. There are three main characters in the story, Ramappa, the narrator of the story, Sita, his sister and the mistress of Javni and Javni, the main protagonist of the story. The most striking thing in the story is that all the three characters in the story are very human, genuine, loving and caring. Still there is much inhumanity, cruelty, and pathos that churns the hearts of the readers and compels them to review their ideologies and examine whether they need some corrections.

Javni is a middle aged woman of years whose personal life is a tale of unending miseries and sorrows. Her husband dies suddenly due to snakebite and after his death Javni is exposed to the hardships of life. After her husband's death Javni's in-laws insult her and turn her out of their house. Javni seeks shelter in her brother's house where even more abuses, insults and miseries are waiting for her. Javni's brother's wife never allows her children to go near Javni because she considers her a cursed woman and she fears that she

would cast some spell on her children and may bewitch them. But the youngest boy loves Javni a lot and she too is deeply attached to him. She always saves her money and eatables to share with him as she does not have her own siblings.

Javni is full of love for everyone around her. She is a simpleton at heart. She is a lively person and always enjoys the juicy gossips of village folks. She keeps her mistress Sita amused by telling her the stories of the entire village. She is extremely religious and also believes in ghosts and evil spirits. She madly adores Ramappa. She is charmed by his handsomeness and thinks him to be an incarnation of some God. This is the height of devotion Javni has for her masters. She feels proud that she has the opportunity to serve a high caste Brahmin family. For Javni being a revenue inspector is the ultimate job for anyone and even for Ramappa she cannot think that he can be other than a revenue inspector in future. Javni evokes sympathy and respect for her forbearance, simplicity and large-heartedness. She always prays to Goddess Talkamma for the well being and prosperity of everyone around her, even for her in-laws who always looked upon her with great hatred and disrespect.

'Javni' is a great story which hits strongly on the caste system prevalent in the society of those times. Ramappa is the chief instrument in the story who hits on the vice of caste system very effectively. He is a kind, sympathetic, educated and compassionate person with a liberal and progressive outlook. He is infuriated and deeply hurt by the inhuman behavior of his sister when he finds that Sita has made Javni eat her food in the dark byre amidst the foul smelling cows and their filth only because she belongs to a low caste and therefore cannot eat inside the house. Although Sita is very kind and friendly with Javni and loves her a lot, she is very much bound to the religious bonds and traditions prevalent in society and has no courage to defy them. The unfortunate incident

drives Sita and Ramappa to a heated argument and finally Sita bursts into pool of tears and Ramappa retires to the garden highly ashamed and disgusted. In utter desperation and dismay he wonders when the Conch of Knowledge would blow and when God would come to end this misery and ignorance.

Ramappa is highly touched by Javni's unadulterated adoration, dedication and devotion for her masters. She bears no malice for anyone in her heart. Javni's faithfulness for her masters is so genuine and unalloyed that without slightest hesitation she willingly agrees to give her entire savings to Ramappa. Her generosity steals his heart. He is deeply shocked to know how little she is paid for her strenuous work. Ramappa's respect for Javni can be easily felt when he asks Javni to adopt him as her son. He honestly wants to serve her and give her all the comforts as a son. Javni is dumbfounded by the blasphemous statement of Ramappa. She is frightened because being a Brahmin Ramappa is a chosen one and a twice born. He is not meant for work. The very thought of adopting Ramappa as her son is very perplexing for Javni because Ramappa is a God for Javni and how she can adopt a God? Scared, Javni prays to Goddess Talkamma to forgive Ramappa for his childishness. The story ends with the final adieu of the revenue inspector's family when they leave the village forever leaving Javni crying inconsolably on the other side of the river.

Courtesy: <http://sudhinama.blogspot.in/2008/09/javni-critical-appreciation.html>

About the author

Raja Rao (8 November 1908 - 8 July 2006) was an Indian writer of English-language novels and short stories, whose works are deeply rooted in Metaphysics. *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), a semi-autobiographical novel recounting a search for spiritual truth

in Europe and India, established him as one of the finest Indian prose stylists and won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964. For the entire body of his work, Rao was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988. Rao's wide-ranging body of work, spanning a number of genres, is seen as a varied and significant contribution to Indian English literature, as well as World literature as a whole.

Courtesy: Wikipedia

‘Javni’

Let us now read the story : I had just arrived. My sister sat by me, talking to me about a thousand things-about my health, my studies, my future, about Mysore, about my younger sister-and I lay sipping the hot, hot coffee that seemed almost like nectar after a tenmile cycle ride on one of those bare, dusty roads of Malkad. I half listened to her and half drowsed away, feeling comfort and freedom after nine wild months in a city. And when I finished my coffee, I asked my sister to go and get another cup; for I really felt like being alone, and also I wanted some more of that invigorating drink. When my sister was gone, I lay on the mat, flat on my face with my hands stretched at my sides. It seemed to me I was carried away by a flood of some sort, caressing, feathery and quiet. I slept. Suddenly, as if in a dream, I heard a door behind me creaking. But I did not move. The door did not open completely, and somebody seemed to be standing by the threshold afraid to come in. 'Perhaps a neighbour'. I said to myself who was she? vaguely, and in my drowsiness I muttered something, stretched out my hands, kicked my feet against the floor and slowly moved my head from one side to the other. The door creaked a little again, and the figure seemed to recede. 'lost' I said to myself. Perhaps I had sent a neighbour

away. I was a little pained. But some deeper instinct told me that the figure was still there. Outside the carts rumbled over the paved street, and some crows cawed across the roof. A few sunbeams stealing through the tiles fell upon my back. I felt happy.

Meanwhile my sister came in, bringing the coffee. 'Ramu', she whispered, standing by me, 'Ramu, my child, are you awake or asleep?

'Awake', I said, turning my head towards the door, which creaked once more and shut itself completely.

'Sita', I whispered, 'there was somebody at the door'.

'When?' she demanded loudly.

'Now! Only a moment ago'. She went to the door and, opening it, looked towards the street. After a while she smiled and called, 'Javni! You monkey! Why don't you come in? Who do you think is here, Javni? My brother-my brother.' She smiled broadly, and a few tears rolled down her cheeks.

'Really, Mother' said a timid voice. 'Really! I wanted to come in. But, seeing Ramappa fast asleep, I thought I'd better wait out here' She spoke the peasant Kannada, drawing the vowels interminably.

'So,' I said to myself, 'she already knows my name'.

'Come in' commanded my sister.

Javni slowly approached the threshold, but still stood outside, gazing as if I were a saint or the holy elephant.

'Don't be shy, come in,' commanded my sister again.

Javni entered and, walking as if in a temple, went and sat by a sack of rice. My sister sat by me, proud and affectionate. I was everything to her-her strength and wealth. She touched my head

and said, 'Rarnu, Javni is our new servant.' I turned towards Javni. She seemed to hide her face.

She was past forty, a little wrinkled beneath the lips and with strange, rapturous eyes. Her hair was turning white, her breasts were fallen and her bare forehead showed pain and widowhood. 'Come near, Javni?' I said.

'No, Ramappa,' she whispered.

'No, come along.' I insisted. She came forward a few steps and sat by the pillar.

'Oh, come nearer, Javni, and see what a beautiful brother I have,' cried Sita.

I was not flattered. Only my big, taplike nose and my thick underlip seemed more monstrous than ever.

Javni crawled along till she was a few steps nearer.

'Oh Come nearer, you monkey,' cried my sister again.

Javni advanced a few feet further and, turning her face towards the floor, sat like a bride beside the bridegroom.

'He looks a prince, Javni' cried my sister.

'A god' numbled Javni.

I laughed and drank my coffee.

'The whole town is mad about him,' whispered Javni.

'How do you know?' asked Sita. 'How! I have been standing at the market place, the whole afternoon, to see when Ramappa would come. You told me he looked like a prince. You said he rode a bicycle. And, when I saw him come by the pipal tree where the fisherman Kodi hanged himself the other day, I ran towards the town and I observed how people gazed and gazed at him. And they

asked me who it was. "Of course, the Revenue Inspector's brother-in-law," I replied. "How beautiful he is!" said fat Nanjundah of the coconut shop. "How like a prince he is!" said the concubine Chowdy. "Oh, a very god!" said my neighbour, barber Venka's wife Kenchi.

"Well, Ramu, so you see, the whole of Malkad is dazzled with your beauty,' interrupted my sister. 'Take care, my child. They say, in this town they practise magic, and I have heard many a beautiful boy has been killed by jealousy.'

'Don't laugh, Ramappa. With these very eyes, with these very two eyes, I have seen the ghosts of more than a hundred young men and women—all killed by magic, Ramappa,' assured Javni, for the first time looking towards me. 'My learned Ramappa, Ramappa, never go out after sunset; for there are spirits of all sorts walking in the dark. Especially never once go by the canal after the cows have gone home. It is a haunted place, Ramappa'.

'How, do you know?' I asked curious.

"How! with these very eyes, I have seen, Ramappa. I have seen it all. The potter's wife Rangi was unhappy. Poor thing! Poor thing! And one night she had such heavy, heavy sorrow, she ran and jumped into the canal. The other day, when I was coming home in the deadly dark with my little lamb, whom should I see but Rangi-Rangi in a white, broad sari, her hair all floating. She stood in front of me. I shivered and wept. She ran and stood by a tree, yelling in a strange voice! "Away! away!" I cried. Then suddenly I saw her standing on the bridge, and she jumped into the canal moaning: "My girl is gone, my child is gone, and I am gone too".

My sister trembled. She had a horror of devils. "Why don't you shut up, you donkey's widow, and not pour out all your Vendantic knowledge?"

'Pardon me, Mother, Pardon me,' she begged.

'I have pardoned you again and again, and yet it is the same old story. Always the same Ramayana. Why don't you fall into the well like Rangi and turn into a devil?' My sister was furious.

Javni smiled and hid her face between her knees, timidly, 'How beautiful your brother is!' she murmured after a moment, ecstatic.

"Did I not say he was like a prince! Who knows what incarnation of a god he may be? Who knows?" my sister whispered, patting me, proudly, religiously.

'Sita!' I replied, and touched her lap with tenderness.

"Without you Javni I could never have lived in this damned place!' said my sister after a moment's silence.

'And without you, I could not have lived either, Mother!' Her voice was so calm and rich that she seemed to sing.

'In this damned place everything is so difficult,' cursed Sita. 'He is always struggling with the collections. The villages are few, but placed at great distances from one another. Sometimes he has been away for more than a week, and I should have died of fright had not Javni been with me. And, she whispered, a little sadly, 'Javni, I am sure, understands my fears, my beliefs. Men, Ramu, can never understand us.'

'Why?' I asked.

'Why?' I cannot say. You are too practical and too irreligious. To us everything is mysterious. Our gods are not your gods, your gods not our gods. It is a simple affair'. She seemed sadder still.

'But yet, I have always tried to understand you,'

I managed to whisper.

'Of course! Of course!' cried my sister, reassured.

'Mother,' muttered Javni trembling, 'Mother! Will you permit me to say one thing?' She seemed to plead.

'Yes!' answered my sister. 'Ramappa, your sister loves you,' said Javni, 'She loves you as though you were her own child. Oh! I wish I had seen her two children. They must have been angels. Perhaps they are in heaven now-in Heaven. Children go to Heaven. But, Ramappa, what I wanted to say was this. Your sister loves you, talks of you all the time, and says, 'if my brother did not live, I should have died long ago'.

'How long have you been with Sita?' I asked Javni, trying to change the subject.

'How long? How long have I been with this family? What do I know! But let me see. This harvest was over and we were husking the grains when they came.'

'How did you happen to find her?' I asked my sister.

'Why, Ramappa,' cried Javni, proud for the first time, there is nobody who can work for a Revenue Insepctor's family as I. You can go and ask everybody in the town, including every pariah if you like and they will tell you, "Javni, she is good like a cow", and they will also add that there is no one who can serve a big man like the Revenue Inspector as Javni-as I.' She beat her breast with satisfaction.

'So you are the most faithful servant among the servants here' I added a little awkwardly.

'Of course!' she cried proudly, her hands folded upon her knees.

'Of course!'

'How many Revenue Inspectors have you served? 'How many? Now let me see,' Here she counted upon her fingers, one by one, remembering them by how many children they had, what sort of

views they had, their caste, their native place, or even how good they had been in giving her two saris, a fouranna. tip or a sack of rice.

'Javni', I said, trying to be a little bit humorous 'suppose I came here one day, say after ten or fifteen or twenty years, and I am not a Revenue Inspector, and I ask you to serve me, Will you or will you not?'

She looked perplexed, laughed and turned towards my sister for help.

'Answer him!' commanded my sister affectionately.

'But Ramappa,' she cried out, full of happiness, as if she had discovered a solution, 'you cannot but be a big man like our Master, the Revenue Inspector. With your learning and your beauty you cannot be anything else. And, when you come here, of course I will be your servant'.

'But if I am not a Revenue Inspector,' I insisted. 'You must be-you must be!' she cried, as if I were insulting myself.

'All right, I shall be a Revenue Inspector in order to have you,' I joked.

'As if it were not enough that I should bleed myself to death in being one.' added my brother-in-law, as he entered through the back door, dust-covered and breathless.

Javni rose up and ran away as if in holy fear. It was the Master. 'She is a sweet thing,' I said to my sister.

'Almost a mother' she added, and smiled.

In the byre Javni was talking to the calf.

My brother-in-law was out touring two or three days in the week. On these days Javni usually came to sleep at our house; for

my sister had a terror of being alone. And, since it had become a habit, Javni came as usual even when I was there. One evening, I cannot remember why, we had dined early, and unrolling our beds, we lay down when it was hardly sunset. Javni came, peeped from the window and called in a whisper, 'Mother, Mother' 'Come in, you monkey,' answered my sister.

Javni opened the door and stepped in. She had a sheet in her hand, and, throwing it on the floor, she went straight into the byre where her food was usually kept. I could not bear that. Time and again I had quarrelled with my sister about it all. But she would not agree with me. 'They are of the lower class, and you cannot ask them to sit and eat with you,' she would say.

'Of course!' I said. 'After all, why not? Are they not like us, like any of us? Only the other day you said you loved her as if she were your elder sister or mother.'

'Yes' she grunted angrily. 'But affection does not ask you to be irreligious'.

'And what, pray, is being irreligious?' I continued, furious.

'Irreligious. Irreligious. Well, eating with a woman of a lower caste is irreligious. And Ramu,' she cried desperately, 'I have enough of quarrelling all the time. In the name of our holy mother, can't you leave me alone!' There, tears!

'You are inhuman!' I spat, disgusted.

'Go and show your humanity!' she grumbled, and, hiding her face beneath the blanket, she wept harder.

I was really much too ashamed and too angry to stay in my bed.

I rose and went into the byre. Javni sat in the dark, swallowing mouthfuls of rice that sounded like a cow chewing the cud. She

thought I had come to go into the garden, but I remained beside her, leaning against the wall. She stopped eating, and looked deeply embarrassed.

'Javni,' I said tenderly.

'Ramappa' she answered, confused.

'Why not light a lantern when you eat, Javni?'

'What's the use?' she replied, and began to chew the cud.

'But you cannot see what you are eating,' I explained.

'I cannot. But there is no necessity to see what you eat.' She laughed as if amused.

'But you must!' I was angry.

'No, Ramappa, I know where my rice is, and I can feel where the pickle is, and that is enough. Just at that moment, the cow threw a heapful of dung, which splashed across the cobbled floor.

'Suppose you come with me into the hall,' I cried. I know I could never convince her.

'No, Ramappa, I am quite well here. I do not want to dirty the floor of the hall.'

'If it is dirty, I will clean it,' I cried, exasperated.

She was silent. In the darkness I saw the shadow of Javni near me, thrown by the faint star light that came from the garden door.

In the corner the cow was breathing hard, and the calf was nibbling at the wisps of hay. It was a terrible moment. The whole misery of the world seemed to be weighing all about and above me. And yet-and yet-the suffering-one seemed to laugh.

'Javni', I said affectionately, 'do you eat at home like this?'

'Yes, Ramappa.' Her tone was sad. 'And why?'

'The oil is too expensive, Ramappa'.

'But surely you can buy it?' I continued.

'No, Ramappa. It costs an anna a bottle, and it lasts only a week.'

'But an anna is nothing,' I said.

'Nothing! Nothing!' She spoke as if frightened. 'Why, my learned Ramappa, it is what I earn in two days.'

'In two days;' I had rarely been more surprised.

'Yes, Ramappa, I earn one rupee each month.'

She seemed content. I heard an owl hoot somewhere, and far, far away, somewhere too far and too distant for my rude ears to hear, the world wept its silent suffering plaints. Had not the Lord said: 'Whenever there is misery and ignorance, I come'? Oh, when will that day come, and when will the Conch of Knowledge blow?

I had nothing to say. My heart beat fast. And, closing my eyes, I sank into the primal flood, the moving fount of Being. Man, I love you.

Javni sat and ate. The mechanical mastication of the rice seemed to represent her life, her cycle of existence.

'Javni,' I inquired, breaking the silence, 'what do you do with the one rupee?'

'I never take it,' she answered laughing.

'Why don't you take it, Javni?'

'Mother keeps it for me. Now and again she says I work well and adds an anna or two to my funds, and one day I shall have enough to buy a sari.'

'And the rest?' I asked.

'The rest? Why, I will buy something for my brother's child.'

'Is your brother poor, Javni?'

'No, but, Ramappa, I love the child.'

'Suppose I asked you to give it to me?' I laughed, since I could not weep.

'Oh you will never ask me, Ramappa, never. But Ramappa, if you should, I would give it to you.' She laughed too, content and amused.

'You are a wonderful thing!' I murmured.

'At your feet, Ramappa!' She had finished eating, and she went into the bathroom to wash her hands. I walked out into the garden and stood looking at the sparkling heavens. There was companionship in their shining. The small and the great clustered together in the heart of the quiet limpid sky. God, knew their caste? Far away the cartman chanted forth :

The night is dark;

Come to me, mother.

The night is quiet;

Come to me, friend.

The winds sighed.

On the nights when Javni came to sleep with us, we gossiped a great deal about village affairs. She had always news to tell us. One day it would be about the postman Subba's wife, who had run away with the Mohammedan of the mango shop. On another day it would be about the miraculous cure of Sata Venkanna's wife, Kanthi, during her recent pilgrimage to the Biligiri temple. My sister always took an interest in those things, and Javni made it her affair to find out everything about everybody. She gossiped the

whole evening till we both fell asleep. My sister usually lay by the window, I near the door, and Javni used to tell me just little about her own life. At first she waved aside my idea; but, after a moment, when my sister howled at her, she accepted it, though unhappily. I was all ears, but my sister was soon snoring comfortably.

Javni was born in the neighbouring village of Kotehalli, where her father cultivated the fields in the winter and washed clothes in the summer. Her mother had always work to do, since there were childbirths almost every day in one village or the other, and, being a hereditary midwife, she was always sent for. Javni had four sisters and two brothers, of whom only her brother Bhima remained. She loved her parents, and they loved her too; and, when she was eighteen, she was duly married to a boy whom they had chosen from Malkad. The boy was good and affectionate, and he never once beat her. He too was a washerman and 'What do you think?' said Javni proudly, he washed clothes for the Maharaja, when he came here.?

'Really!' I exclaimed.

And she continued. Her husband was, as I have said, a good man, and he really cared for her. He never made her work too much, and he always cooked for her when she fell sick. One day, however, as the gods decided it, a snake bit him while he was washing clothes by the river, and, in spite of all the magic that the barber Subba applied, he died that very evening, crying to the last, 'Javni, Javni, my Javni'. (I should have expected her to weep here. But she continued without any exclamation or sighs). Then came all the misfortunes one after the other, and yet she knew they were nothing, for, above all, she said, Goddess Talakamma moved and reigned.

Her husband belonged to a family of three brothers and two sisters. The elder brother was a wicked fellow, who played cards and got drunk two days out of three. The second was her husband,

and the third was a haughty young fellow, who had already it was known, made friends with the concubine Siddi, the former mistress of the priest Rangappa. He treated his wife as if she were an ox and once he actually beat her till she was bleeding and unconscious.

There were many children in the family, and since one of the sisters-in-law also lived in the same village, her children too came to play in the house. So Javni lived on happily, working at home as usual and doing her little to earn for the family funds.

She never knew, she said, how it all happened, but one day a policeman came, frightened everybody, and took away her elder brother-in-law for some reason that nobody understood. The women were all terrified and everybody wept. The people in the town began to spit at them as they passed by, and left cattle to graze away all the crops in the fields to show their hatred and their revenge. Shame, poverty and quarrels, these followed one another. And because the elder brother-in-law was in prison and the younger with his mistress, the women at home made her life miserable!

"You dirty widow" they would say and spit on me. I wept and sobbed and often wanted to go and fall into the river. But I knew Goddess Talakamma would be angry with me, and I stopped each time I wanted to kill myself. One day, however, my elder sister-in-law became so evil mouthed that I ran away from the house. I did not know to whom to go, since I knew nobody and my brother hated me, he always hated me. But anyway, 'Ramappa' she said, 'anyway, a sister is a sister. You cannot deny that the same mother has suckled you both'.

'Of course not!'

I said. 'But he never treated me as you treat your sister.'

'So, you are jealous, you ill-boding widow!' swore my sister, waking up. She always thought people hated or envied her.

'No Mother, no,' Javni pleaded.

'Go, on' I said.

'I went to my brother,' she continued. 'As soon as his wife saw me she swore and spat and took away her child who was playing in the verandah, saying it would be bewitched. After a moment my brother came out.

"Why have you come?" he asked me.

"I am without a home," I said.

"You dirty widow how can you find a house to live in, when you carry misfortune wherever you set your foot?"

"Weep, weep" he cried, "weep till your tears flood the Cauvery. But you will not get a morsel of rice from me. No, not a morsel"

"No," I said. "I do not want a morsel of rice. I want only a palm-width of shelter to put myself under."

He seemed less angry. He looked this side and that and roared: "Do you promise me never to quarrel with anyone?"

"Yes!"

I answered, still weeping.

"Then for the peace of the spirit of my father, I will give you the little hut by the garden door. You can sit, weep, eat, shit, die-do what you like there," he said. I trembled. In the meantime my sister-in-law came back. She frowned and thumped the floor, swearing at me and calling me a prostitute, a donkey, a witch. Ramappa, I never saw a woman like that.

"How?" I asked.

'How! I cannot say. It is ten years or twenty since I set foot in their house. And every day I wake up with "donkey's wife" or "prostitute" in my ears.'

'But you don't have anything to do with her?' I said.

'I don't. But the child sometimes comes to me because I love him and then my sister-in-law rushes out, roaring like a tigress, and says she will flay me to death if I touch the child again.'

'You should not touch it,' I said.

'Of course I would not if I had my own child. But, Ramappa, that little boy loves me.'

'And why don't they want you to touch him?'

'Because they say I am a witch and an evil spirit.' She wept.

'They both of them say it. But still, Ramappa,' here she suddenly turned gay-'I always keep mangoes and cakes that Mother gives me and save them all for the little boy. So he runs away from his mother each time the door is open. He is such a sweet, sweet thing.' She was happy.

'How old is he?' I asked.

'Four.'

'Is he their only child?'

'No, They have four-all grown up. One is already a boy as big as you.'

'And the others, do they love you?'

'No. They all hate me, they all hate me-except that child'.

'Why don't you adopt a child?'

'No, Ramappa. I have a lamb, and that is enough.'

'You have a lamb too!' I said, surprised.

'Yes, a lamb for the child to play with now, and, when the next Durga festival comes, I will offer it to Goddess Talakamma'.

'Offer it to the Goddess' Why, Javani? Why not let it live?'

'Don't speak sacrilege, Ramappa. I owe a lamb every three years to the Goddess.'

'And what does she give in return?'

'What do you say! What!' She was angry, 'All! Everything! Should I live if that Goddess did not protect me? Would that child come to me if the Goddess did not bless me? Why, Ramappa, everything is hers. Great Goddess Talakamma, give everybody good health and long life and all progeny! Protect me, Mother!' She was praying.

'What will she give me if I offer a lamb?' I asked.

'Everything, Ramappa. You will grow learned; you will become a big man; you will marry a rich wife. Ramappa,' she said, growing affectionate all of a sudden, 'I have already been praying for you. When Mother said she had a brother, I said to the Goddess, "Keep that boy strong and virtuous and give him all the eight riches of Heaven and earth." '

'Do you love me more or less than your brother's child?' I asked, to change the subject.

She was silent for a moment.

'You don't know?' I said.

'No, Ramappa. I have been thinking. I offer the lamb to the Goddess for the sake of the child. I have not offered a lamb for you. So how can I say whom I love more?'

'The child' I said.

'No, no, I love you as much, Ramappa.' 'Will you adopt me?' No, I was not joking. She broke into fits of laughter which woke up my sister.

'Oh, Shut up!' cried Sita.

'Do you know Javni is going to adopt me?'

'Adopt you! Why does she not go and fall into the river?' she roared, and went to sleep again.

'If you adopt me, Javni, I will work for you and give you food to eat.'

'No, learned Ramappa. A Brahmin is not meant to work. You are the "chosen ones". Chosen ones, indeed. 'No, we are not' I murmured.

'You are. You are. The sacred books are yours. The Vedas are yours. You are all, you are all, you are the twice born. We are your servants, Ramappa-your slaves.'

'I am not a Brahmin,' I said half-jokingly, half-seriously. 'Now,' I said, feeling sleepy, 'now Javni, go to sleep and think again tomorrow.'

She laughed again.

'If you do not adopt me, I shall die now and grow into a lamb in my next life and you will buy it. What will you do then?' She did not say anything. It was too perplexing.

'Now,' I said, feeling sleepy, 'now Javni, go to sleep and think again tomorrow morning whether you will adopt me or not.'

'Adopt you! You are a god, Ramappa, a god! I cannot adopt you.'

I dozed away. Only in the stillness I heard Javni saying: Goddess, Great Goddess, as I vowed, I will offer thee my lamb. Protect the child, protect Mother, protect her brother, protect Master, O Goddess Protect me!'

The Goddess stood silent, in the little temple by the Cauvery amidst the whisper of the woods.

A July morning, two summers later. Our cart rumbled over the boulders of the street, and we were soon at the village square. Javni was running behind the cart, with tears rolling down her cheeks. For one full week I had seen her weeping all the time, all the time dreading the day when we should leave her and she would see us no more. She was breathless. But she walked fast, keeping pace with the bullocks.

I was with my sister in the back of the cart, and my brother-in-law sat in front, beside the cart man, My sister too was sad, In her heart she knew she was leaving a friend. Yes. Javni had been her friend, her only friend. Now again they gazed at each other, and I could see Javni suddenly sobbing like a child.

'Mother, Mother,' she would say approaching the cart, 'don't forget me.'

'I will not. No, I assure you, I will not.'

Now my sister too was in tears.

'Even if she should, I will not,' I added. I myself should have wept had I not been so civilized.

When we touched the river, it was already broad morning.

Now, in the summer, there was so little water that the ferry was not plying and we were going to wade through. The cartman said he would rest the bullocks for a moment, and I got out partly to breathe the fresh air but more to speak to Javni.

'Don't weep,' I said to her.

'Ramappa, how can I help it? Shall I ever see again a family of gods like yours? Mother was kind to me, kind like a veritable

goddess. You were so, so good to me, and Master.' Here she broke again into sobs.

'No, Javni. In contact with a heart like yours, who will not bloom into a god?' But she simply wept. My words meant nothing to her. She was nervous, and she trembled over and over again. 'Mother, Mother,' she would say between her sobs.

'O Mother' the cartman asked me to get in. I got into the cart with a heavy heart. I was leaving a most wonderful soul. I was in. The cartman cried, 'Hoy, hoyee' And the bulls stepped into the river. Till we were on the other bank, I could see Javni sitting on a rock, and looking towards us. In my heart I still seemed to hear her sobs. A huge pipal rose behind her, and, across the blue waters of the river and the vast, vast sky above her, she seemed so small, just a spot in space, recedingly real. Who was she?

Toba Tek Singh

Summary

"Toba Tek Singh" is a short story written by Saadat Hasan Manto and published in 1955. It follows inmates in a Lahore asylum, some of whom are to be transferred to India following the independence of Pakistan in 1947. The story is a "powerful satire" on the relationship between India and Pakistan.

Plot summary

The story is set two or three years after the 1947 independence, when the governments of India and Pakistan decided to exchange some Muslim, Sikh and Hindu lunatics, and revolves around Bishan Singh, a Sikh inmate of an asylum in Lahore, who is from the town of Toba Tek Singh. As part of the exchange, Bishan Singh is sent under police escort to India, but upon being told that his hometown Toba Tek Singh is in Pakistan, he refuses to go. The story ends with Bishan lying down in the no man's land between the two barbed wire fences: "There, behind barbed wire, was Hindustan. Here, behind the same kind of barbed wire, was Pakistan. In between, on that piece of ground that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh."

About the author

Saadat Hasan Manto (11 May 1912 - 18 January 1955) was a writer, playwright and author born in British India. He produced 22 collections of short stories, a novel, five series of radio plays, three collections of essays and two collections of personal sketches. His best short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics. Manto was known to write about the atrocious truths that no one dared to talk about. Manto is best known for his stories about the partition of the subcontinent immediately following independence in 1947.

Manto was tried for obscenity six times; thrice before 1947 in British India, and thrice after independence in 1947 in Pakistan, but never convicted.

Courtesy: Wikipedia

Toba Tek Singh

by Saadat Hasan Manto

Two or three years after the 1947 Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. The Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent over to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums were to be handed over to India.

It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at the topmost level on both sides. After high-level conferences were held a day was fixed for exchange of the lunatics. It was agreed that those Muslims who had families in India would be permitted to stay back while the

rest would be escorted to the border. Since almost all the Hindus and Sikhs had migrated from Pakistan, the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not arise. All of them were to be taken to India.

Nobody knew what transpired in India, but so far as Pakistan was concerned this news created quite a stir in the lunatic asylum at Lahore, leading to all sorts of funny developments. A Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fiery Urdu daily *Zamindar*, when asked what Pakistan was, reflected for a while and then replied, "Don't you know? A place in India known for manufacturing cut-throat razors." Apparently satisfied, the friend asked no more questions.

Likewise, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being deported to India? We don't even know their language." The Sikh gave a knowing smile. "But I know the language of Hindostoras" he replied. "These bloody Indians, the way they strut about!"

One day while taking his bath, a Muslim lunatic yelled, "Pakistan Zindabad!" with such force that he slipped, fell down on the floor and was knocked unconscious.

Not all the inmates were insane. Quite a few were murderers. To escape the gallows, their relatives had gotten them in by bribing the officials. They had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation. Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture and the asylum wardens were illiterates from whose conversation they could not glean anything. All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name of Quaid-e-Azam who had set up a separate state for Muslims, called Pakistan. But they had no idea where Pakistan was. That was why they were all at a loss whether they

were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, how come that only a short while ago they were in India? How could they be in India a short while ago and now suddenly in Pakistan?

One of the lunatics got so bewildered with this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rigmarole that one day while sweeping the floor he climbed up a tree, and sitting on a branch, harangued the people below for hours on end about the delicate problems of India and Pakistan. When the guards asked him to come down he climbed up still higher and said, "I don't want to live in India and Pakistan. I'm going to make my home right here on this tree."

All this hubbub affected a radio engineer with an MSc degree, a Muslim, a quiet man who took long walks by himself. One day he stripped off all his clothes, gave them to a guard and ran in the garden stark naked.

Another Muslim inmate from Chiniot, an erstwhile adherent of the Muslim League who bathed fifteen or sixteen times a day, suddenly gave up bathing. As his name was Mohammed Ali, he one day proclaimed that he was none other than Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Taking a cue from him a Sikh announced that he was Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. This could have led to open violence. But before any harm could be done the two lunatics were declared dangerous and locked up in separate cells.

Among the inmates of the asylum was a Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad because of unrequited love. He was deeply pained when he learnt that Amritsar, where the girl lived, would form part of India. He roundly abused all the Hindu and Muslim leaders who had conspired to divide India into two, thus making his beloved an Indian and him a Pakistani. When the talks

on the exchange were finalized his mad friends asked him to take heart since now he could go to India. But the young lawyer did not want to leave Lahore, for he feared for his legal practice in Amritsar.

There were two Anglo-Indians in the European ward. When informed the British were leaving, they spent hours together discussing the problems they would be faced with: Would the European ward be abolished? Would they get breakfast? Instead of bread, would they have to make do with measly Indian chapattis?

There was a Sikh who had been admitted into the asylum fifteen years ago. Whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain." The guards said that he had not slept a wink in all this time. He would not even lie down to rest. His feet were swollen with constant standing and his calves had puffed out in the middle, but in spite of this agony he never cared to lie down. He listened with rapt attention to all discussions about the exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan. If someone asked his views on the subject he would reply in a grave tone: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan." But later on he started substituting "the Government of Pakistan" with "Tobak Tek Singh," which was his home town. Now he began asking where Toba Tek Singh was, in order to go there. But nobody seemed to know where it was. Those who tried to explain themselves got bogged down in another enigma: Sialkot, which used to be in India, now was in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which was now in Pakistan, would slide over to India. Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing! And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?

The hair on the Sikh lunatic's head had thinned and his beard had matted, making him look wild and ferocious. But he was a

harmless creature. In fifteen years he had not even once had a row with anyone. The older employees of the asylum knew that he had been a well-to-do fellow who had owned considerable land in Toba Tek Singh. Then he had suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him to the asylum in chains and left him there. They came to meet him once a month but ever since the communal riots had begun, his relatives had stopped visiting him.

His name was Bishan Singh but everybody called him Toba Tek Singh. He did not know what day it was, what month it was and how many years he had spent in the asylum. Yet as if by instinct he knew when his relatives were going to visit, and on that day he would take a long bath, scrub his body with soap, put oil in his hair, comb it and put on clean clothes. If his relatives asked him anything he would keep silent or burst out with Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain."

When he had been brought to the asylum, he had left behind an infant daughter. She was now a comely and striking young girl of fifteen, who Bishan Singh failed to recognize. She would come to visit him, and not be able to hold back her tears.

When the India-Pakistan caboodle started Bishan Singh often asked the other inmates where Toba Tek Singh was. Nobody could tell him. Now even the visitors had stopped coming. Previously his sixth sense would tell him when the visitors were due to come. But not anymore. His inner voice seemed to have stilled. He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. He was sure they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had the feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh, his old home.

One of the lunatics had declared himself God. One day Bishan Singh asked him where Toba Tek Singh was. As was his habit the man greeted Bishan Singh's question with a loud laugh and then

said, "It's neither in India nor in Pakistan. In fact, it is nowhere because till now I have not taken any decision about its location."

Bishan begged the man who called himself God to pass the necessary orders and solve the problem. But 'God' seemed to be very busy with other matters. At last Bishan Singh's patience ran out and he cried out: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fateh boley so nihal sat sri akal."

What he wanted to say was: "You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have surely helped me out."

A few days before the exchange was due to take place, a Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happened to be a friend of Bishan Singh came to meet him. He had never visited him before. On seeing him, Bishan Singh tried to slink away, but the warden barred his way. "Don't you recognize your friend Fazal Din?" he said. "He has come to meet you." Bishan Singh looked furtively at Fazal Din, then started to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on Bishan Singh's shoulder. "I have been thinking of visiting you for a long time," he said. "But I couldn't get the time. Your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. As for your daughter, Roop Kaur" --he hesitated-- "She is safe too in India."

Bishan Singh kept quiet. Fazal Din continued: "Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon you'll be moving to India. Please give my salaam to bhai Balbir Singh and bhai Raghbir Singh and bahain Amrit Kaur. Tell Balbir that Fazal Din is well. The two brown buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately, one of them died. Say I think of them often and to write to me if there is anything I can do."

Then he added "Here, I've brought some plums for you."

Bishan Singh took the gift from Fazal Din and handed it to the guard. "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" he asked.

"Where? Why, it is where it has always been."

"In India or Pakistan?"

"In India? Oh no, in Pakistan."

Without saying another word, Bishan Singh walked away, muttering "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhyana the mung the dal of the Pakistan and India dur fittey moun."

At long last the arrangements for the exchange were complete. The lists of lunatics who were to be sent over from either side were exchanged and the date fixed.

On a cold winter evening truckloads of Hindu and Sikh lunatics from the Lahore asylum were moved out to the Indian border under police escort. Senior officials went with them to ensure a smooth exchange. The two sides met at the Wagah border check-post, signed documents and the transfer got underway.

Getting the lunatics out of the trucks and handing them over to the opposite side proved to be a tough job. Some refused to get down from the trucks. Those who could be persuaded to do so began to run in all directions. Some were stark naked. As soon as they were dressed they tore off their clothes again. They swore, they sang, they fought with each other. Others wept. Female lunatics, who were also being exchanged, were even noisier. It was pure bedlam. Their teeth chattered in the bitter cold.

Most of the inmates appeared to be dead set against the entire operation. They simply could not understand why they were being forcibly removed to a strange place. Slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad' and 'Pakistan Murdabad' were raised, and only timely intervention prevented serious clashes.

When Bishan Singh's turn came to give his personal details to be recorded in the register, he asked the official "Where's Toba Tek Singh? In India or Pakistan?"

The officer laughed loudly, "In Pakistan, of course."

Hearing that Bishan Singh turned and ran back to join his companions. The Pakistani guards caught hold of him and tried to push him across the line to India. Bishan Singh wouldn't move. "This is Toba Tek Singh," he announced. "Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dyhana mung the dal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan."

It was explained to him over and over again that Toba Tek Singh was in India, or very soon would be, but all this persuasion had no effect.

They even tried to drag him to the other side, but it was of no use. There he stood on his swollen legs as if no power on earth could dislodge him. Soon, since he was a harmless old man, the officials left him alone for the time being and proceeded with the rest of the exchange.

Just before sunrise, Bishan Singh let out a horrible scream. As everybody rushed towards him, the man who had stood erect on his legs for fifteen years, now pitched face-forward on to the ground. On one side, behind barbed wire, stood together the lunatics of India and on the other side, behind more barbed wire, stood the lunatics of Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

“The Bet”

Summary

"The Bet" is an 1889 short story by Anton Chekhov about a banker and a young lawyer who make a bet with each other about whether the death penalty is better or worse than life in prison.

As the story opens, the banker recalls the occasion of the bet fifteen years before. Guests at the party that he was hosting that day fell into a discussion of capital punishment; the banker argued that capital punishment is more humane than life imprisonment, while the young lawyer disagreed, insisting that he would choose life in prison rather than death. They agree to a bet of two million rubles that the lawyer cannot spend fifteen years in solitary confinement. The bet was on, and the lawyer cast himself into isolation for fifteen years.

The man spends his time in confinement reading books, writing, playing piano, studying, drinking wine, and educating himself. We find him continuously growing throughout the story. We see various phases in his term of imprisonment over the years. At first, the lawyer suffered from severe loneliness and depression. But soon he began studying vigorously. He begins with languages and other related subjects. Then, a mix of science, literature, philosophy and other seemingly random subjects. He ends up reading some six hundred volumes in the course of four years. Then,

the Gospel followed by theology and histories of religion. In the final two years, the imprisoned lawyer read immensely on chemistry, medicine and philosophy, and sometimes works of Byron or Shakespeare.

In the meantime, the banker's fortune declines and he realizes that if he loses, paying off the bet will leave him bankrupt.

The day before the fifteen-year period concludes, the banker resolves to kill the lawyer so as to not owe him the money. On his way to do so, however, the banker finds a note written by the lawyer. The note declares that in his time in confinement he has learned to despise material goods as fleeting things and he believes that knowledge is worth more than money. To this end he elects to renounce the reward of the bet. The banker was moved and shocked to his bones after reading the note, kisses the strange man on the head and leaves the lodge weeping, relieved not to have to kill anyone. The prison warden later reports that the lawyer has left the guest house, thus losing the bet but proving his point that solitary confinement is more humane than death punishment as it gives a chance to a person (the lawyer in this story) to develop himself. The lawyer also unwittingly saves his own life by writing the note.

Courtesy Wikipedia

About the Author

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (29 January 1860 - 15 July 1904) was a Russian playwright and short-story writer, who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short fiction in history. His career as a playwright produced four classics, and his best short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics. Along with Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, Chekhov is often referred to as one of the three seminal figures in the birth of early modernism in the theatre. Chekhov practiced as a medical doctor throughout

most of his literary career: "Medicine is my lawful wife", he once said, "and literature is my mistress."

Chekhov renounced the theatre after the reception of *The Seagull* in 1896, but the play was revived to acclaim in 1898 by Konstantin Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre, which subsequently also produced Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and premiered his last two plays, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. These four works present a challenge to the acting ensemble as well as to audiences, because in place of conventional action Chekhov offers a "theatre of mood" and a "submerged life in the text".

Chekhov had at first written stories only for financial gain, but as his artistic ambition grew, he made formal innovations which have influenced the evolution of the modern short story. He made no apologies for the difficulties this posed to readers, insisting that the role of an artist was to ask questions, not to answer them.

Courtesy Wikipedia

"The Bet"

by Anton Chekhov

I

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years before. There were many clever people at the party and much interesting conversation. They talked among other things of capital punishment. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. They found it obsolete as a means of punishment, unfitted to a Christian State and immoral. Some of

them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life-imprisonment.

"I don't agree with you," said the host. "I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life-imprisonment, but if one may judge a priori, then in my opinion capital punishment is more moral and more humane than imprisonment. Execution kills instantly, life-imprisonment kills by degrees. Who is the more humane executioner, one who kills you in a few seconds or one who draws the life out of you incessantly, for years?"

"They're both equally immoral," remarked one of the guests, "because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire."

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said:

"Capital punishment and life-imprisonment are equally immoral; but if I were offered the choice between them, I would certainly choose the second. It's better to live somehow than not to live at all."

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker who was then younger and more nervous suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out:

"It's a lie. I bet you two millions you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years."

"If you mean it seriously," replied the lawyer, "then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen."

"Fifteen! Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two millions."

"Agreed. You stake two millions, I my freedom," said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at that time had too many millions to count, spoiled and capricious, was beside himself with rapture. During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

"Come to your senses, young roan, before it's too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you'll never stick it out any longer. Don't forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary is much heavier than enforced imprisonment. The idea that you have the right to free yourself at any moment will poison the whole of your life in the cell. I pity you."

And now the banker, pacing from corner to corner, recalled all this and asked himself:

"Why did I make this bet? What's the good? The lawyer loses fifteen years of his life and I throw away two millions. Will it convince people that capital punishment is worse or better than imprisonment for life? No, no! all stuff and rubbish. On my part, it was the caprice of a well-fed man; on the lawyer's pure greed of gold."

He recollected further what happened after the evening party. It was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation, in a garden wing of the banker's house. It was agreed that during the period he would be deprived of the right to cross the threshold, to see living people, to hear human voices, and to receive letters and newspapers. He was permitted to have a musical instrument, to read books, to write letters, to drink wine and smoke tobacco. By the agreement he could communicate, but only in silence, with the outside world through a little window specially constructed for this purpose. Everything necessary, books, music, wine, he could receive in any quantity by sending a note through the window. The agreement

provided for all the minutest details, which made the confinement strictly solitary, and it obliged the lawyer to remain exactly fifteen years from twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1870, to twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1885. The least attempt on his part to violate the conditions, to escape if only for two minutes before the time freed the banker from the obligation to pay him the two millions.

During the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer, as far as it was possible to judge from his short notes, suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom. From his wing day and night came the sound of the piano. He rejected wine and tobacco. "Wine," he wrote, "excites desires, and desires are the chief foes of a prisoner; besides, nothing is more boring than to drink good wine alone," and tobacco spoils the air in his room. During the first year the lawyer was sent books of a light character; novels with a complicated love interest, stories of crime and fantasy, comedies, and so on.

In the second year the piano was heard no longer and the lawyer asked only for classics. In the fifth year, music was heard again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him said that during the whole of that year he was only eating, drinking, and lying on his bed. He yawned often and talked angrily to himself. Books he did not read. Sometimes at nights he would sit down to write. He would write for a long time and tear it all up in the morning. More than once he was heard to weep.

In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously to study languages, philosophy, and history. He fell on these subjects so hungrily that the banker hardly had time to get books enough for him. In the space of four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request. It was while that passion lasted that the banker received the following letter from the prisoner: "My dear gaoler, I am writing these lines in six languages. Show them to experts. Let

them read them. If they do not find one single mistake, I beg you to give orders to have a gun fired off in the garden. By the noise I shall know that my efforts have not been in vain. The geniuses of all ages and countries speak in different languages; but in them all burns the same flame. Oh, if you knew my heavenly happiness now that I can understand them!" The prisoner's desire was fulfilled. Two shots were fired in the garden by the banker's order.

Later on, after the tenth year, the lawyer sat immovable before his table and read only the New Testament. The banker found it strange that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred erudite volumes, should have spent nearly a year in reading one book, easy to understand and by no means thick. The New Testament was then replaced by the history of religions and theology.

During the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an extraordinary amount, quite haphazard. Now he would apply himself to the natural sciences, then he would read Byron or Shakespeare. Notes used to come from him in which he asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a text-book of medicine, a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. He read as though he were swimming in the sea among broken pieces of wreckage, and in his desire to save his life was eagerly grasping one piece after another.

II

The banker recalled all this, and thought:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock he receives his freedom. Under the agreement, I shall have to pay him two millions. If I pay, it's all over with me. I am ruined for ever ..."

Fifteen years before he had too many millions to count, but now he was afraid to ask himself which he had more of, money or

debts. Gambling on the Stock-Exchange, risky speculation, and the recklessness of which he could not rid himself even in old age, had gradually brought his business to decay; and the fearless, self-confident, proud man of business had become an ordinary banker, trembling at every rise and fall in the market.

"That cursed bet," murmured the old man clutching his head in despair... "Why didn't the man die? He's only forty years old. He will take away my last farthing, marry, enjoy life, gamble on the Exchange, and I will look on like an envious beggar and hear the same words from him every day: 'I'm obliged to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you.' No, it's too much! The only escape from bankruptcy and disgrace-is that the man should die."

The clock had just struck three. The banker was listening. In the house every one was asleep, and one could hear only the frozen trees whining outside the windows. Trying to make no sound, he took out of his safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house. The garden was dark and cold. It was raining. A damp, penetrating wind howled in the garden and gave the trees no rest. Though he strained his eyes, the banker could see neither the ground, nor the white statues, nor the garden wing, nor the trees. Approaching the garden wing, he called the watchman twice. There was no answer. Evidently the watchman had taken shelter from the bad weather and was now asleep somewhere in the kitchen or the greenhouse.

"If I have the courage to fulfil my intention," thought the old man, "the suspicion will fall on the watchman first of all."

In the darkness he groped for the steps and the door and entered the hall of the garden-wing, then poked his way into a narrow passage and struck a match. Not a soul was there. Some one's bed, with no bedclothes on it, stood there, and an iron stove loomed

dark in the corner. The seals on the door that led into the prisoner's room were unbroken.

When the match went out, the old man, trembling from agitation, peeped into the little window.

In the prisoner's room a candle was burning dimly. The prisoner himself sat by the table. Only his back, the hair on his head and his hands were visible. Open books were strewn about on the table, the two chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner never once stirred. Fifteen years' confinement had taught him to sit motionless. The banker tapped on the window with his finger, but the prisoner made no movement in reply. Then the banker cautiously tore the seals from the door and put the key into the lock. The rusty lock gave a hoarse groan and the door creaked. The banker expected instantly to hear a cry of surprise and the sound of steps. Three minutes passed and it was as quiet inside as it had been before. He made up his mind to enter.

Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton, with tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman's, and a shaggy beard. The colour of his face was yellow, of an earthy shade; the cheeks were sunken, the back long and narrow, and the hand upon which he leaned his hairy head was so lean and skinny that it was painful to look upon. His hair was already silvering with grey, and no one who glanced at the senile emaciation of the face would have believed that he was only forty years old. On the table, before his bended head, lay a sheet of paper on which something was written in a tiny hand.

"Poor devil," thought the banker, "he's asleep and probably seeing millions in his dreams. I have only to take and throw this half-dead thing on the bed, smother him a moment with the pillow,

and the most careful examination will find no trace of unnatural death. But, first, let us read what he has written here."

The banker took the sheet from the table and read:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock midnight, I shall obtain my freedom and the right to mix with people. But before I leave this room and see the sun I think it necessary to say a few words to you. On my own clear conscience and before God who sees me I declare to you that I despise freedom, life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world.

"For fifteen years I have diligently studied earthly life. True, I saw neither the earth nor the people, but in your books I drank fragrant wine, sang songs, hunted deer and wild boar in the forests, loved women... And beautiful women, like clouds ethereal, created by the magic of your poets' genius, visited me by night and whispered to me wonderful tales, which made my head drunken. In your books I climbed the summits of Elbruz and Mont Blanc and saw from there how the sun rose in the morning, and in the evening suffused the sky, the ocean and the mountain ridges with a purple gold. I saw from there how above me lightnings glimmered cleaving the clouds; I saw green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, cities; I heard syrens singing, and the playing of the pipes of Pan; I touched the wings of beautiful devils who came flying to me to speak of God... In your books I cast myself into bottomless abysses, worked miracles, burned cities to the ground, preached new religions, conquered whole countries...

"Your books gave me wisdom. All that unwearying human thought created in the centuries is compressed to a little lump in my skull. I know that I am cleverer than you all.

"And I despise your books, despise all worldly blessings and wisdom. Everything is void, frail, visionary and delusive as a mirage.

Though you be proud and wise and beautiful, yet will death wipe you from the face of the earth like the mice underground; and your posterity, your history, and the immortality of your men of genius will be as frozen slag, burnt down together with the terrestrial globe.

"You are mad, and gone the wrong way. You take falsehood for truth and ugliness for beauty. You would marvel if suddenly apple and orange trees should bear frogs and lizards instead of fruit, and if roses should begin to breathe the odour of a sweating horse. So do I marvel at you, who have bartered heaven for earth. I do not want to understand you.

"That I may show you in deed my contempt for that by which you live, I waive the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise, and which I now despise. That I may deprive myself of my right to them, I shall come out from here five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement."

When he had read, the banker put the sheet on the table, kissed the head of the strange man, and began to weep. He went out of the wing. Never at any other time, not even after his terrible losses on the Exchange, had he felt such contempt for himself as now. Coming home, he lay down on his bed, but agitation and tears kept him a long time from sleeping...

The next morning the poor watchman came running to him and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the wing climb through the window into the garden. He had gone to the gate and disappeared. The banker instantly went with his servants to the wing and established the escape of his prisoner. To avoid unnecessary rumours he took the paper with the renunciation from the table and, on his return, locked it in his safe.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Summary

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is a tragic play by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written in 1599. It is one of several plays written by Shakespeare based on true events from Roman history, which also include Coriolanus and Antony and Cleopatra.

Although the play is named Julius Caesar, Brutus speaks more than four times as many lines as the title character; and the central psychological drama of the play focuses on Brutus' struggle between the conflicting demands of honor, patriotism, and friendship.

The play opens with two tribunes discovering the commoners of Rome celebrating Julius Caesar's triumphant return from defeating the sons of his military rival, Pompey. The tribunes, insulting the crowd for their change in loyalty from Pompey to Caesar, attempt to end the festivities and break up the commoners, who return the insults. During the feast of Lupercal, Caesar holds a victory parade and a soothsayer warns him to "Beware the ides of March", which he ignores. Meanwhile, Cassius attempts to convince Brutus to join his conspiracy to kill Caesar. Although Brutus, friendly towards Caesar, is hesitant to kill him, he agrees that Caesar may be abusing his power. They then hear from Casca that Mark Antony has offered Caesar the crown of Rome three times and that

each time Caesar refused it with increasing reluctance. On the eve of the ides of March, the conspirators meet and reveal that they have forged letters of support from the Roman people to tempt Brutus into joining. Brutus reads the letters and, after much moral debate, decides to join the conspiracy, thinking that Caesar should be killed to prevent him from doing anything against the people of Rome if he were ever to be crowned.

After ignoring the soothsayer, as well as his wife Calpurnia's own premonitions, Caesar goes to the Senate. The conspirators approach him with a fake petition pleading on behalf of Metellus Cimber's banished brother. As Caesar predictably rejects the petition, Casca and the others suddenly stab him; Brutus is last. At this point, Caesar utters the famous line "Et tu, Brute?" ("And you, Brutus?", i.e. "You too, Brutus?"), concluding with "Then fall, Caesar!"

The conspirators make clear that they committed this murder for the good of Rome, not for their own purposes, and do not attempt to flee the scene. Brutus delivers an oration defending his own actions, and for the moment, the crowd is on his side. However, Mark Antony makes a subtle and eloquent speech over Caesar's corpse, beginning with the much-quoted "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!" In this way, he deftly turns public opinion against the assassins by manipulating the emotions of the common people, in contrast to the rational tone of Brutus's speech, yet there is method in his rhetorical speech and gestures: he reminds them of the good Caesar had done for Rome, his sympathy with the poor, and his refusal of the crown at the Lupercal, thus questioning Brutus's claim of Caesar's ambition; he shows Caesar's bloody, lifeless body to the crowd to have them shed tears and gain sympathy for their fallen hero; and he reads Caesar's will, in which every Roman citizen would receive 75 drachmas. Antony, even as he states his intentions against it, rouses

the mob to drive the conspirators from Rome. Amid the violence, an innocent poet, Cinna, is confused with the conspirator Lucius Cinna and is taken by the mob, which kills him for such "offences" as his bad verses.

Brutus next attacks Cassius for supposedly soiling the noble act of regicide by having accepted bribes. ("Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake? / What villain touch'd his body, that did stab, / And not for justice?") The two are reconciled, especially after Brutus reveals that his beloved wife committed suicide under the stress of his absence from Rome; they prepare for a civil war against Mark Antony and Caesar's adopted son, Octavius, who have formed a triumvirate in Rome with Lepidus. That night, Caesar's ghost appears to Brutus with a warning of defeat. (He informs Brutus, "Thou shalt see me at Philippi.")

At the battle, Cassius and Brutus, knowing that they will probably both die, smile their last smiles to each other and hold hands. During the battle, Cassius has his servant kill him after hearing of the capture of his best friend, Titinius. After Titinius, who was not really captured, sees Cassius's corpse, he commits suicide. However, Brutus wins that stage of the battle, but his victory is not conclusive. With a heavy heart, Brutus battles again the next day. He loses and commits suicide by running on his own sword, held for him by a loyal soldier.

The play ends with a tribute to Brutus by Antony, who proclaims that Brutus has remained "the noblest Roman of them all" because he was the only conspirator who acted, in his mind, for the good of Rome. There is then a small hint at the friction between Mark Antony and Octavius which characterises another of Shakespeare's Roman plays, Antony and Cleopatra.

Courtesy :Wikipedia

About the Author

William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 (baptised) - 23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His extant works, including collaborations, consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith. Some time between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men. At age 49 around 1613, he appears to have retired to Stratford, where he died three years later. Few records of Shakespeare's private life survive, which has stimulated considerable speculation about such matters as his physical appearance, sexuality, religious beliefs and whether the works attributed to him were written by others. These speculations are often criticized for failing to point out the fact that few records survive of most commoners of his period.

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories, which are regarded as some of the best work ever produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances and collaborated with other playwrights.

Many of his plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy during his lifetime. However, in 1623 John Heminges and Henry Condell, two friends and fellow actors of Shakespeare, published a more definitive text known as the First Folio, a posthumous collected edition of his dramatic works that included all but two of the plays now recognised as Shakespeare's. It was prefaced with a poem by Ben Jonson, in which Shakespeare is hailed, presciently, as "not of an age, but for all time".

In the 20th and 21st centuries, his works have been repeatedly adapted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Courtesy : Wikipedia

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

ACT II

SCENE I. Rome. BRUTUS's orchard.

Enter BRUTUS

BRUTUS : What, Lucius, ho!

I cannot, by the progress of the stars,

Give guess how near to day. Lucius, I say!

I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.

When, Lucius, when? awake, I say! what, Lucius!

Enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS : Call'd you, my lord?

BRUTUS : Get me a taper in my study, Lucius:

When it is lighted, come and call me here.

LUCIUS : I will, my lord.

Exit

BRUTUS : It must be by his death: and for my part,

I know no personal cause to spurn at him,

But for the general. He would be crown'd:

How that might change his nature, there's the question.

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;

And that craves wary walking. Crown him?--that;--

And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,

That at his will he may do danger with.

The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins

Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of
Caesar,

I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round.
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow
mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS : The taper burneth in your closet, sir.
Searching the window for a flint, I found
This paper, thus seal'd up; and, I am sure,
It did not lie there when I went to bed.
Gives him the letter

BRUTUS : Get you to bed again; it is not day.
Is not to-morrow, boy, the ides of March?

LUCIUS : I know not, sir.

BRUTUS : Look in the calendar, and bring me word.

LUCIUS : I will, sir.
Exit

BRUTUS : The exhalations whizzing in the air
Give so much light that I may read by them.
Opens the letter and reads
'Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake, and see thyself.
Shall Rome, & c. Speak, strike, redress!
Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake!'
Such instigations have been often dropp'd
Where I have took them up.
'Shall Rome, & c.' Thus must I piece it out:
Shall Rome stand under one man's awe? What,
Rome?

My ancestors did from the streets of Rome
The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king.
'Speak, strike, redress!' Am I entreated
To speak and strike? O Rome, I make thee
promise:

If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!
Re-enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS : Sir, March is wasted fourteen days.
Knocking within

BRUTUS : 'Tis good. Go to the gate; somebody knocks.
Exit LUCIUS

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,

I have not slept.
 Between the acting of a dreadful thing
 And the first motion, all the interim is
 Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
 The Genius and the mortal instruments
 Are then in council; and the state of man,
 Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
 The nature of an insurrection.

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS : Sir, 'tis your brother Cassius at the door,
 Who doth desire to see you.

BRUTUS : Is he alone?

LUCIUS : No, sir, there are moe with him.

BRUTUS : Do you know them?

LUCIUS : No, sir; their hats are pluck'd about their ears,
 And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
 That by no means I may discover them
 By any mark of favour.

BRUTUS : Let 'em enter.

Exit LUCIUS

They are the faction. O conspiracy,
 Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by
 night,
 When evils are most free? O, then by day
 Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
 To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none,
 conspiracy;

Hide it in smiles and affability:
 For if thou path, thy native semblance on,
 Not Erebus itself were dim enough
 To hide thee from prevention.

Enter the conspirators, CASSIUS, CASCA,
 DECIUS BRUTUS, CINNA, METELLUS
 CIMBER, and TREBONIUS

CASSIUS : I think we are too bold upon your rest:
 Good morrow, Brutus; do we trouble you?

BRUTUS : I have been up this hour, awake all night.
 Know I these men that come along with you?

CASSIUS : Yes, every man of them, and no man here
 But honours you; and every one doth wish
 You had but that opinion of yourself
 Which every noble Roman bears of you.
 This is Trebonius.

BRUTUS : He is welcome hither.

CASSIUS : This, Decius Brutus.

BRUTUS : He is welcome too.

CASSIUS : This, Casca; this, Cinna; and this, Metellus
 Cimber.

BRUTUS : They are all welcome.
 What watchful cares do interpose themselves
 Betwixt your eyes and night?

CASSIUS : Shall I entreat a word?

BRUTUS and CASSIUS whisper

DECIUS BRUTUS: Here lies the east: doth not the day break
 here?

CASCA : No.

CINNA : O, pardon, sir, it doth; and yon gray lines
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.

CASCA : You shall confess that you are both deceived.
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,
Which is a great way growing on the south,
Weighing the youthful season of the year.
Some two months hence up higher toward the
north
He first presents his fire; and the high east
Stands, as the Capitol, directly here.

BRUTUS : Give me your hands all over, one by one.

CASSIUS : And let us swear our resolution.

BRUTUS : No, not an oath: if not the face of men,
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse,--
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,
And every man hence to his idle bed;
So let high-sighted tyranny range on,
Till each man drop by lottery. But if these,
As I am sure they do, bear fire enough
To kindle cowards and to steel with valour
The melting spirits of women, then, countrymen,
What need we any spur but our own cause,
To prick us to redress? what other bond
Than secret Romans, that have spoke the word,
And will not palter? and what other oath
Than honesty to honesty engaged,

That this shall be, or we will fall for it?
Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous,
Old feeble carrions and such suffering souls
That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear
Such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain
The even virtue of our enterprise,
Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,
To think that or our cause or our performance
Did need an oath; when every drop of blood
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,
Is guilty of a several bastardy,
If he do break the smallest particle
Of any promise that hath pass'd from him.

CASSIUS : But what of Cicero? shall we sound him?
I think he will stand very strong with us.

CASCA : Let us not leave him out.

CINNA : No, by no means.

METELLUS CIMBER: O, let us have him, for his silver hairs
Will purchase us a good opinion
And buy men's voices to commend our deeds:
It shall be said, his judgment ruled our hands;
Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear,
But all be buried in his gravity.

BRUTUS : O, name him not: let us not break with him;
For he will never follow any thing
That other men begin.

CASSIUS : Then leave him out.

CASCA : Indeed he is not fit.
 DECIUS BRUTUS: Shall no man else be touch'd but only Caesar?
 CASSIUS : Decius, well urged: I think it is not meet,
 Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar,
 Should outlive Caesar: we shall find of him
 A shrewd contriver; and, you know, his means,
 If he improve them, may well stretch so far
 As to annoy us all: which to prevent,
 Let Antony and Caesar fall together.
 BRUTUS : Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
 To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
 Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;
 For Antony is but a limb of Caesar:
 Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
 We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;
 And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
 O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
 And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
 Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,
 Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
 Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
 Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds:
 And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
 Stir up their servants to an act of rage,
 And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
 Our purpose necessary and not envious:
 Which so appearing to the common eyes,

We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.
 And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
 For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
 When Caesar's head is off.
 CASSIUS : Yet I fear him;
 For in the ingrafted love he bears to Caesar--
 BRUTUS : Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him:
 If he love Caesar, all that he can do
 Is to himself, take thought and die for Caesar:
 And that were much he should; for he is given
 To sports, to wildness and much company.
 TREBONIUS: There is no fear in him; let him not die;
 For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter.
 Clock strikes
 BRUTUS : Peace! count the clock.
 CASSIUS : The clock hath stricken three.
 TREBONIUS: Tis time to part.
 CASSIUS : But it is doubtful yet,
 Whether Caesar will come forth to-day, or no;
 For he is superstitious grown of late,
 Quite from the main opinion he held once
 Of fantasy, of dreams and ceremonies:
 It may be, these apparent prodigies,
 The unaccustom'd terror of this night,
 And the persuasion of his augurers,
 May hold him from the Capitol to-day.
 DECIUS BRUTUS: Never fear that: if he be so resolved,

I can o'ersway him; for he loves to hear
 That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,
 And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,
 Lions with toils and men with flatterers;
 But when I tell him he hates flatterers,
 He says he does, being then most flattered.
 Let me work;
 For I can give his humour the true bent,
 And I will bring him to the Capitol.

CASSIUS : Nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him.

BRUTUS : By the eighth hour: is that the uttermost?

CINNA : Be that the uttermost, and fail not then.

METELLUS CIMBER: Caius Ligarius doth bear Caesar hard,
 Who rated him for speaking well of Pompey:
 I wonder none of you have thought of him.

BRUTUS : Now, good Metellus, go along by him:
 He loves me well, and I have given him reasons;
 Send him but hither, and I'll fashion him.

CASSIUS : The morning comes upon's: we'll leave you,
 Brutus.
 And, friends, disperse yourselves; but all remember
 What you have said, and show yourselves true
 Romans.

BRUTUS : Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily;
 Let not our looks put on our purposes,
 But bear it as our Roman actors do,
 With untired spirits and formal constancy:

And so good morrow to you every one.
 Exeunt all but BRUTUS
 Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter;
 Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:
 Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
 Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
 Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

Enter PORTIA

PORTIA : Brutus, my lord!

BRUTUS : Portia, what mean you? wherefore rise you now?
 It is not for your health thus to commit
 Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.

PORTIA : Nor for yours neither. You've ungently, Brutus,
 Stole from my bed: and yesternight, at supper,
 You suddenly arose, and walk'd about,
 Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
 And when I ask'd you what the matter was,
 You stared upon me with ungentle looks;
 I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,
 And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot;
 Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,
 But, with an angry wafture of your hand,
 Gave sign for me to leave you: so I did;
 Fearing to strengthen that impatience
 Which seem'd too much enkindled, and withal
 Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
 Which sometime hath his hour with every man.

It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
 And could it work so much upon your shape
 As it hath much prevail'd on your condition,
 I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
 Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

BRUTUS : I am not well in health, and that is all.

PORTIA : Brutus is wise, and, were he not in health,
 He would embrace the means to come by it.

BRUTUS : Why, so I do. Good Portia, go to bed.

PORTIA : Is Brutus sick? and is it physical
 To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
 Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,
 And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,
 To dare the vile contagion of the night
 And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air
 To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus;
 You have some sick offence within your mind,
 Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
 I ought to know of: and, upon my knees,
 I charm you, by my once-commended beauty,
 By all your vows of love and that great vow
 Which did incorporate and make us one,
 That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
 Why you are heavy, and what men to-night
 Have had to resort to you: for here have been
 Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
 Even from darkness.

BRUTUS : Kneel not, gentle Portia.

PORTIA : I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.
 Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
 Is it excepted I should know no secrets
 That appertain to you? Am I yourself
 But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
 To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
 And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the
 suburbs
 Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
 Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

BRUTUS : You are my true and honourable wife,
 As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
 That visit my sad heart

PORTIA : If this were true, then should I know this secret.
 I grant I am a woman; but withal
 A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:
 I grant I am a woman; but withal
 A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.
 Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
 Being so father'd and so husbanded?
 Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em:
 I have made strong proof of my constancy,
 Giving myself a voluntary wound
 Here, in the thigh: can I bear that with patience.
 And not my husband's secrets?

BRUTUS : O ye gods,
 Render me worthy of this noble wife!

Knocking within
 Hark, hark! one knocks: Portia, go in awhile;
 And by and by thy bosom shall partake
 The secrets of my heart.
 All my engagements I will construe to thee,
 All the charactery of my sad brows:
 Leave me with haste.

Exit PORTIA

Lucius, who's that knocks?

Re-enter LUCIUS with LIGARIUS

LUCIUS : He is a sick man that would speak with you.

BRUTUS : Caius Ligarius, that Metellus spake of.

Boy, stand aside. Caius Ligarius! how?

LIGARIUS : Vouchsafe good morrow from a feeble tongue.

BRUTUS : O, what a time have you chose out, brave Caius,
 To wear a kerchief! Would you were not sick!

LIGARIUS : I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand
 Any exploit worthy the name of honour.

BRUTUS : Such an exploit have I in hand, Ligarius,
 Had you a healthful ear to hear of it.

LIGARIUS : By all the gods that Romans bow before,
 I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!
 Brave son, derived from honourable loins!
 Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up
 My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,
 And I will strive with things impossible;
 Yea, get the better of them. What's to do?

BRUTUS : A piece of work that will make sick men whole.

LIGARIUS : But are not some whole that we must make sick?

BRUTUS : That must we also. What it is, my Caius,
 I shall unfold to thee, as we are going
 To whom it must be done.

LIGARIUS : Set on your foot,
 And with a heart new-fired I follow you,
 To do I know not what: but it sufficeth
 That Brutus leads me on.

BRUTUS : Follow me, then.

Exeunt

SCENE II. CAESAR's house.

Thunder and lightning. Enter CAESAR, in his
 night-gown

CAESAR : Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night:
 Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out,
 'Help, ho! they murder Caesar!' Who's within?
 Enter a Servant

Servant

My lord?

CAESAR : Go bid the priests do present sacrifice
 And bring me their opinions of success.
 Servant

I will, my lord.

Exit

Enter CALPURNIA

CALPURNIA: What mean you, Caesar? think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house to-day.

CAESAR : Caesar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see
The face of Caesar, they are vanished.

CALPURNIA: Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead;
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Caesar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.

CAESAR : What can be avoided
Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?
Yet Caesar shall go forth; for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.

CALPURNIA: When beggars die, there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of
princes.

CAESAR : Cowards die many times before their deaths;

The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard.
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Re-enter Servant

What say the augurers?

Servant

They would not have you to stir forth to-day.
Plucking the entrails of an offering forth,
They could not find a heart within the beast.

CAESAR : The gods do this in shame of cowardice:
Caesar should be a beast without a heart,
If he should stay at home to-day for fear.
No, Caesar shall not: danger knows full well
That Caesar is more dangerous than he:
We are two lions litter'd in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible:
And Caesar shall go forth.

CALPURNIA: Alas, my lord,
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth to-day: call it my fear
That keeps you in the house, and not your own.
We'll send Mark Antony to the senate-house:
And he shall say you are not well to-day:
Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.

CAESAR : Mark Antony shall say I am not well,

And, for thy humour, I will stay at home.

Enter DECIUS BRUTUS

Here's Decius Brutus, he shall tell them so.

DECIUS BRUTUS: Caesar, all hail! good morrow, worthy Caesar:

I come to fetch you to the senate-house.

CAESAR : And you are come in very happy time,
To bear my greeting to the senators
And tell them that I will not come to-day:
Cannot, is false, and that I dare not, falser:
I will not come to-day: tell them so, Decius.

CALPURNIA: Say he is sick.

CAESAR : Shall Caesar send a lie?
Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far,
To be afraid to tell graybeards the truth?
Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

DECIUS BRUTUS: Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,
Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so.

CAESAR : The cause is in my will: I will not come;
That is enough to satisfy the senate.
But for your private satisfaction,
Because I love you, I will let you know:
Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home:
She dreamt to-night she saw my statua,
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,
Did run pure blood: and many lusty Romans
Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it:
And these does she apply for warnings, and
portents,

And evils imminent; and on her knee

Hath begg'd that I will stay at home to-day.

DECIUS BRUTUS: This dream is all amiss interpreted;

It was a vision fair and fortunate:

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press
For tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance.
This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.

CAESAR : And this way have you well expounded it.

DECIUS BRUTUS: I have, when you have heard what I can say:
And know it now: the senate have concluded
To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.
If you shall send them word you will not come,
Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock
Apt to be render'd, for some one to say
'Break up the senate till another time,
When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams.'
If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper
'Lo, Caesar is afraid'?
Pardon me, Caesar; for my dear dear love
To our proceeding bids me tell you this;
And reason to my love is liable.

CAESAR : How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!
I am ashamed I did yield to them.
Give me my robe, for I will go.

Enter PUBLIUS, BRUTUS, LIGARIUS,
METELLUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, and
CINNA

And look where Publius is come to fetch me.

PUBLIUS : Good morrow, Caesar.

CAESAR : Welcome, Publius.

What, Brutus, are you stirr'd so early too?

Good morrow, Casca. Caius Ligarius,

Caesar was ne'er so much your enemy

As that same ague which hath made you lean.

What is 't o'clock?

BRUTUS : Caesar, 'tis stricken eight.

CAESAR : I thank you for your pains and courtesy.

Enter ANTONY

See! Antony, that revels long o' nights,

Is notwithstanding up. Good morrow, Antony.

ANTONY : So to most noble Caesar.

CAESAR : Bid them prepare within:

I am to blame to be thus waited for.

Now, Cinna: now, Metellus: what, Trebonius!

I have an hour's talk in store for you;

Remember that you call on me to-day:

Be near me, that I may remember you.

TREBONIUS: Caesar, I will:

Aside

and so near will I be,

That your best friends shall wish I had been further.

CAESAR : Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with
me;

And we, like friends, will straightway go together.

BRUTUS : [Aside] That every like is not the same, O Caesar,
The heart of Brutus yearns to think upon!

Exeunt

SCENE III. A street near the Capitol.

Enter ARTEMIDORUS, reading a paper

ARTEMIDORUS: 'Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius;
come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna, trust
not

Trebonius: mark well Metellus Cimber: Decius
Brutus

loves thee not: thou hast wronged Caius Ligarius.

There is but one mind in all these men, and it is
bent against Caesar. If thou beest not immortal,
look about you: security gives way to conspiracy.

The mighty gods defend thee! Thy lover,

'ARTEMIDORUS.': Here will I stand till Caesar pass along,

And as a suitor will I give him this.

My heart laments that virtue cannot live

Out of the teeth of emulation.

If thou read this, O Caesar, thou mayst live;

If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive.

Exit

**SCENE IV. Another part of the same street, before the house
of BRUTUS.**

Enter PORTIA and LUCIUS

- PORTIA : I prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone:
Why dost thou stay?
- LUCIUS : To know my errand, madam.
- PORTIA : I would have had thee there, and here again,
Ere I can tell thee what thou shouldst do there.
O constancy, be strong upon my side,
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.
How hard it is for women to keep counsel!
Art thou here yet?
- LUCIUS : Madam, what should I do?
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?
- PORTIA : Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth: and take good note
What Caesar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! what noise is that?
- LUCIUS : I hear none, madam.
- PORTIA : Prithee, listen well;
I heard a bustling rumour, like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.
- LUCIUS : Sooth, madam, I hear nothing.
Enter the Soothsayer

- PORTIA : Come hither, fellow: which way hast thou been?
Soothsayer
At mine own house, good lady.
- PORTIA : What is't o'clock?
Soothsayer
About the ninth hour, lady.
- PORTIA : Is Caesar yet gone to the Capitol?
Soothsayer
Madam, not yet: I go to take my stand,
To see him pass on to the Capitol.
- PORTIA : Thou hast some suit to Caesar, hast thou not?
Soothsayer
That I have, lady: if it will please Caesar
To be so good to Caesar as to hear me,
I shall beseech him to befriend himself.
- PORTIA : Why, know'st thou any harm's intended towards
him?
Soothsayer
None that I know will be, much that I fear may
chance.
Good morrow to you. Here the street is narrow:
The throng that follows Caesar at the heels,
Of senators, of praetors, common suitors,
Will crowd a feeble man almost to death:
I'll get me to a place more void, and there
Speak to great Caesar as he comes along.
Exit

PORTIA : I must go in. Ay me, how weak a thing
 The heart of woman is! O Brutus,
 The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!
 Sure, the boy heard me: Brutus hath a suit
 That Caesar will not grant. O, I grow faint.
 Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
 Say I am merry: come to me again,
 And bring me word what he doth say to thee.
 Exeunt severally

A Poison Tree

Summary

"A Poison Tree" is a poem written by William Blake, published in 1794 as part of his Songs of Experience collection. It describes the narrator's repressed feelings of anger towards an individual, emotions which eventually lead to murder. The poem explores themes of indignation, revenge, and more generally the fallen state of mankind.

The poem suggests that acting on anger reduces the need for vengeance, which may be connected to the British view of anger held following the start of the French Revolution. The revolutionary forces were commonly connected to the expression of anger with opposing sides arguing that the anger was either a motivating rationale or simply blinded an individual to reason. Blake, like Coleridge, believed that anger needed to be expressed, but both were wary of the type of emotion that, rather than guide, was able to seize control.

Poisoning appears in many of Blake's poems. The poisoner of "A Poison Tree" is similar to Blake's Jehovah, Urizen, Satan, and Newton. Through poisoning an individual, the victim ingests part of the poisoner, as food, through reading, or other actions, as an inversion on the Eucharist. Through ingestion, the poisoned sense of reason of the poisoner is forced onto the poisoned. Thus, the

death of the poisoned can be interpreted as a replacement of the poisoned's individuality. The world of the poem is one where dominance is key, and there is no reciprocal interaction between individuals because of a lack of trust.

The poem, like others in *Songs of Experience*, reflects a uniquely Christian sense of alienation. As such, "A Poison Tree" appears to play off the Christian idea of self-denial, and it is possible that Blake is relying on Emanuel Swedenborg's theme of piety concealing malice, which ultimately alienates the individual from their true identity and evil no longer appears to be evil. Blake's poem differs from Swedenborg's theory by containing an uncontrollable progression through actions that lead to the conclusion. The final murder is beyond the control of the narrator, and the poem reflects this by switching from past to the present tense. The poem's theme of duplicity and the inevitable conclusion is similar to the anonymous poem "There was a man of double deed."

The image of the tree appears in many of Blake's poems, and seems connected to his concept of the Fall of Man. It is possible to read the narrator as a divine figure who uses the tree to seduce mankind into disgrace. This use of the fallen state can also be found in the poems "The Human Abstract" and "London" from the *Songs of Experience* series. The actual tree, described as a tree of "Mystery", appears again in "The Human Abstract", and both trees are grown within the mind.

Courtesy Wikipedia

About the Poet

William Blake (28 November 1757 - 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the

history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. What he called his prophetic works were said by 20th-century critic Northrop Frye to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry led 21st-century critic Jonathan Jones to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". In 2002, Blake was placed at number 38 in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons. Although he lived in London his entire life (except for three years spent in Felpham), he produced a diverse and symbolically rich oeuvre, which embraced the imagination as "the body of God" or "human existence itself".

Although Blake was considered mad by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, he is held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity, and for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work. His paintings and poetry have been characterised as part of the Romantic movement and as "Pre-Romantic". Reverent of the Bible but hostile to the Church of England (indeed, to almost all forms of organised religion), Blake was influenced by the ideals and ambitions of the French and American Revolutions. Though later he rejected many of these political beliefs, he maintained an amiable relationship with the political activist Thomas Paine; he was also influenced by thinkers such as Emanuel Swedenborg. Despite these known influences, the singularity of Blake's work makes him difficult to classify. The 19th-century scholar William Rossetti characterised him as a "glorious luminary", and "a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors".

Courtesy : Wikipedia

A Poison Tree

by William Blake

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

A Slumber did my Spirit Seal

Summary

"A slumber did my spirit seal" is a poem written by William Wordsworth in 1798 and published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. It is usually included as one of his Lucy poems, although it is the only poem of the series not to mention her name. The poem is a mere eight lines long; two "stanzas."

During the autumn of 1798, Wordsworth travelled to Germany with his sister Dorothy and fellow poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. From October 1798, Wordsworth worked on the first drafts for his "Lucy poems", which included "Strange fits of passion have I known", "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" and "A slumber". In December 1798, Wordsworth sent copies of "Strange fits" and "She dwelt" to Coleridge and followed his letter with "A slumber". Eventually, "A slumber", was published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

Unique amongst Lucy poems, "A slumber" does not directly mention Lucy. The decision by critics to include the poem as part of the series is based in part on Wordsworth's placing it in close proximity to "Strange fits" and directly after "She dwelt" in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

About the Poet

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 - 23 April 1850) was a major English Romantic poet who, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, helped to launch the Romantic Age in English literature with their joint publication *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

Wordsworth's magnum opus is generally considered to be *The Prelude*, a semi-autobiographical poem of his early years that he revised and expanded a number of times. It was posthumously titled and published, before which it was generally known as "the poem to Coleridge". Wordsworth was Britain's poet laureate from 1843 until his death from pleurisy on 23 April 1850.

Courtesy : Wikipedia

A Slumber did my Spirit Seal

by William Wordsworth

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

On His Blindness

Summary

"When I Consider How My Light is Spent" is one of the best known of the sonnets of John Milton (d. 1674). The last three lines (concluding with "They also serve who only stand and wait.") are particularly well known, though rarely quoted in context.

The sonnet was first published in Milton's 1673 *Poems*. In his autograph notebook (known as the "Trinity Manuscript" from its location in the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge), Milton gave the sonnet the number 19, but in the published book it was numbered 16 (see Kelley, 1956; Revard, 2009, p. 569), so both numbers are in use for it. It is popularly given the title *On His Blindness*, but there is no evidence that Milton used this title; it was assigned a century later by Thomas Newton in his 1761 edition of Milton's poetry, as was commonly done at the time by editors of posthumous collections (Ferry, 1996, p. 18).

It is always assumed that the poem was written after the publication of Milton's 1645 *Poems*. It may have been written as early as 1652, although most scholars believe it was composed sometime between June and October 1655, when Milton's blindness was essentially complete. However, most discussions of the dating depend on the assumption that Newton's title reflects Milton's intentions, which may not be true. More reliable evidence of the date of the poem comes from the fact that it appears in the "Trinity

Manuscript", which is believed to contain material written between about 1631 and 1659 (see Revard, 2009, p. 543); and that, unlike earlier material in the Trinity manuscript, it is not written in Milton's own handwriting, but that of a scribe, who also wrote out several other of the sonnets to which Milton assigned higher numbers (Shawcross, 1959).

Haskin (1994) discusses some of the likely interpretative errors that readers have made as a result of assuming that the common title of the poem is authentic. For example, the "one talent" that Milton mourns his inability to use is not necessarily his poetic ability; it might as easily be his ability to translate texts from foreign languages, the task for which he was responsible in the Commonwealth government. However, the references to light and darkness in the poem make it virtually certain that Milton's blindness was at least a secondary theme.

The sonnet is in the Petrarchan form, with the rhyme scheme a b b a a b b a c d e c d e, as can be seen in the text below.

Courtesy : Wikipedia

About the Poet

John Milton (9 December 1608 - 8 November 1674) was an English poet, polemicist, man of letters, and civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell. He wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval, and is best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), written in blank verse.

Milton's poetry and prose reflect deep personal convictions, a passion for freedom and self-determination, and the urgent issues and political turbulence of his day. Writing in English, Latin, Greek, and Italian, he achieved international renown within his lifetime, and his celebrated *Areopagitica* (1644), written in condemnation of pre-publication censorship, is among history's most influential

and impassioned defences of free speech and freedom of the press.

William Hayley's 1796 biography called him the "greatest English author", and he remains generally regarded "as one of the preeminent writers in the English language", though critical reception has oscillated in the centuries since his death (often on account of his republicanism). Samuel Johnson praised *Paradise Lost* as "a poem which...with respect to design may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind", though he (a Tory and recipient of royal patronage) described Milton's politics as those of an "acrimonious and surly republican".

Courtesy : Wikipedia

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent,
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one Talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest he returning chide;
 "Dost God exact day-labour, light denied?"
 I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
 Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
 Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
 And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:
 They also serve who only stand and wait.

Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Summary

Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 was first published in 1609. Its structure and form are a typical example of the Shakespearean sonnet.

The poet begins by stating he should not stand in the way of "the marriage of true minds", and that love cannot be true if it changes for any reason; true love should be constant, through any difficulties. In the seventh line, the poet makes a nautical reference, alluding to love being much like the north star is to sailors. Love also should not fade with time; instead, true love is, as is the polar star, "ever-fixèd" and lasts forever.

"The movement of 116, like its tone, is careful, controlled, laborious...it defines and redefines its subject in each quatrain, and this subject becomes increasingly vulnerable". It starts out as motionless and distant, remote, independent, then moves to be "less remote, more tangible and earthbound", and the final couplet brings a sense of "coming back down to earth". Ideal love is deteriorating throughout the sonnet and continues to do so through the couplet.

Courtesy : Wikipedia

About the Poet

(See Prose)

Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds

by William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Functional Grammar

1. Transformation of Sentences

Affirmative, Negative, Interrogative, etc., Simple, Compound, Complex; Direct and Indirect Speech; Voice; Active and Passive.

2. The Verb

Transitive and Intransitive, Linking Verbs, Phrasal Verbs.

3. Tenses

Uses of Tenses; Simple Present, Present Continuous, Simple Past, Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Present Perfect Continuous, Past Perfect, Past Perfect Continuous, Simple Future, Future Continuous, Future Perfect, Future Perfect Continuous; The Sequence of Tenses; Conditionals; Real, Unreal, Impossible.

4. Word Classes : Function Class

Determiners, Prepositions, Conjunctions, Pronouns.

5. Concord

Subject Verb Agreement

6. Linkers

7. Punctuation

8. Letter Writing

Business Correspondence : Structure, Complaint Letter, Bio-data; Social Correspondence; Letter of Congratulation, Letter of Regret.

9. Essay Writing

10. Precis Writing

Vocabulary

1. Words Similar in Pronunciation

2. Synonymous Words Often Confused

3. Idioms and Phrases

4. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

5. Foreign Words and Phrases in Common Use

6. Proverbs

7. Common Errors of Indian Students

Key to Answers
