

## **Sacrifice as Motif: A Comparative Study of in Yeats and Nair**

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The foregoing discussion of the works of W.B. Yeats and Edasseri Govindan Nair has revealed and exemplified certain aspects of sacrifice, which has remained an ever-changing social institution from the pre-historical time to the present. The kernel element or the deep structure of sacrifice is the scapegoat, "a necessary evil that society tolerates only in the hope of preventing worse ills". The scapegoat serves as a mechanism for diverting or redirecting violence of all forms and contents with relatively least harm to the individual or society. The ancient Greek city states maintained a group of scapegoat-individuals or the pharmakos-community, who were posted or positioned at the "margins" of the system, and who problematised the very outside/inside binary that the system upholds and/or is upheld by. Modern societies maintain similar individuals or groups who can be termed the "other." The distinctions and brandings like class, caste, gender, race and nationality make certain groups the "other" in the dominant discourses. Various degrading, discarding and denigrating epithets like "useless", "effeminate," "inferior," "weak-willed," "non-believing," "sinful," "criminal" and "wretched" exist to describe the "other." But the very constitution of a society depends on the "other," for society has meaning only in relation to the other as the other serves as a contrast. good angels are known as a foil to the bad. The dominant and the central exist as contrasted to the marginalized. mankind survives as

there is womankind. When there was matriarchy, male-consorts were the pharmakos. Pururavas's plea to save his precious life is turned down by Urvasi. Kosambi interprets the hymn in Rg Veda thus: "Pururavas is to be sacrificed after having begotten a son and successor upon Urvasi; he pleads in vain against her determination". Kali in "Kavile Pattu," the Pootam in "Poota Pattun and the Queens in A Full Moon in March and The King of the Great Clock Tower decapitate young heroes and lusty lovers and drink their blood.

The goddesses or queens dance or sing in glee and the blood bath is termed as sacrifice. As women wield the upper hand in society, as in matriarchal times, mother goddesses or queens confirm their power by slaying the relatively powerless male consorts. They are "lusty" and quarrelsome. They cannot be fed and kept for long. But they are inevitable, for "conceiving," constituting, containing and continuing the community. Male consorts are the 'other' in such a society. The citizens of the Greek city states sacrifice the pharmakos when the city or the system is threatened by a famine, drought or the threat of external aggression or war. The pharmakos bear the burden of the crime or sin or the threat of violence. The matriarch or her mythical counterpart, the mother goddess, also does the same. When an epidemic, famine or dearth is widespread, she demands the blood of young martyrs or lusty devotees. Suitors or male consorts living temporarily with queens or young women pose a threat to the female-centered system. Their virginity is violated and their fecundity decreased. Such a desecration or violent threat can be nullified and the purity and sanctity regained by the ritual purification in blood immolation.

The sacrifice of male consorts achieves this desired effect with no danger or harm within the female system. It is the "other" who are destroyed. The male consorts are the "pharmakos" in both senses of the term--they are the saviours of the system and, at the same time, its scapegoats. Patriarchal colonisation inverts the pattern. Mankind becomes the dominant and womankind, the "other. " Whenever catastrophes come the women are found fault with. In spite of Deirdre's warnings, Fergus and Naoise land her in inescapable difficulties. They scold her for her apprehensions and arguments. They denigrate her, indicating her inferior status in society as the "other" sex. King Conchubar wants to possess her. Deirdre's feminine physical beauty, an advance attribute and a cause for admiration and adoration in matriarchal setup, becomes a source for curse which attracts the jealous male ruler's aggressive encroachment. Similarly, the images of decoration associated with Kubja throughout "Varadanam" show that she is an ornamental object. The background of the game of chess presents her as a piece to be thrown away when the game suggests so. She is at first posted at the doorway of Kamsan's palace, not exactly a part of the system and not wholly outside it as the King needs her embrocation. Krishnan also does not fully accommodate her. She is in a state of

limbo, neither a queen nor a servant. Her job of smearing others with sandal and saffron is lost. Instead, Krishnan transforms her body.

Nobody in the palace considers Kubja one among them. She has been dispossessed of all spaces to occupy, in a territorial sense. Krishnan the male coloniser leaves his newly conquered territory and goes back to his former palace. Kubja, being a non-passive and non-silent sufferer, a female subaltern who speaks, raises her protest and finds, later, a space in Krishnan's palace. The mother in "Vivaha Sammanam" feels that her elder unmarried daughter is a source of permanent heart-burn. If a man remains unmarried, the society will not ridicule or crucify his family. But, if a woman remains so, her family has to suffer calumnies and aspersions. The elder daughter is the former lady love of her sister's bridegroom. For a time, he rouses hopes in the elder, but later he turns away from her. Alienated from every adult member of the society, she drowns herself.

Were she to continue her wretched existence, the patriarchal society would have called her a man-eater demoness or a blood-sucking vampire. As the husband in her imagination has "died," she, by suicide, observes sati. Another alienated and castaway woman discussed in this study is Moll Magee. Her husband turns her away from the house when their child dies. The entire responsibility of the catastrophe is transferred upon the female scapegoat.

The successive continental settler colonisers with their Christian gods and male discourse and the Aryan brahminical and other settler colonisers with their male-dominated pantheon of gods and patriarchal discourse made the native deities marginalised, unattended and dispossessed in Ireland and Kerala respectively. Thenceforth, the native deities have been the "other" in relation to the settlers' dominant ones. Many inauspicious and evil happenings are associated with the "other." The Christian discourse brands them as fallen angels or evil spirits. The dominant brahminical scriptures find them related to left-handed worship or black magic. Still, they are worshipped and maintained by villagers and subaltern natives. The native Irish call them "Good People" and their counterparts in Kerala are termed to be Ugra Uoorties .

Their presence and influence can be seen in "Kavile Pattu," 'Poota Pattu,' The Countess Cathleen, Cathleen ni Houlihan, The Lard of Heart's Desire, At the Hawk's Well and The Herne's Egg. The imprints of different levels of colonisation--territorial, economic, gender and religious--are seen in the present plight of the native deities. Their dwellings are in remote, hilly regions, far away from the city centers. They are underfed and shrunken in size. Most of them are female deities. Official and institutionalised religious worships rarely recognise their identity but as the "other." Even those who adore them often do it on the sly. This reminds one of Frantz Fanon's statement: "A national culture under colonial domination is a contested culture whose destruction is sought in systematic fashion. It very quickly becomes a culture condemned to secrecy" .

The socio-historical fact revealed here is that the natives are treated as the "other" by the settler-colonisers. These "outsiders" are characterised as threatening peaceful and settled life. The elder sister's argument that the Pootam Should be given donation and the similar one related to the giving of alms to Cathleen ni Houlihan have the intention of taming and propitiating the "others." The term "other" encompasses within itself all the marginalised and dispossessed sections of society. For example the subaltern peasants and labourers in "puthenkalavum Arivalum," "Panimutakkam" and "Kudiyirakkal" are also the "other." For the rich dominant landlords, they are needed for clearing and cultivating farms and fields. If a drought or flood comes, the whole burden of crop-failure will be thrust upon the shoulders of the peasants. If the yield is good, it will be confiscated by the landlord. Labourers like Raman are necessary to run the textile mill. But they should not ask for more wages.

They have rights and freedom only to work hard for the benefit of the lords and the welfare of their systems. As workers they are inside the system. But, as they have no ownership rights or share in forming the policy of running farms or textile mills, the subaltern peasants and workers are outside the system. When the landlord "feels" that there is a threat from them to his interests, they are evicted. The sub/alter or pharmakos-farmers have no claims to occupation or existence.

The patterns of sacrifice associated with mother-goddess figures in the works analysed reveal the relationship between the degree of power possessed by

them and their "grade" or position in the sacrificial events. Every reduction in their dominance in the hierarchical societal structure is seen reflected as a corresponding reduction in the "quality" of the sacrificial victims. The gradual socio-historical evolution from matriarchy to patriarchy can be read from the nature of the sacrificial events described in the literary works discussed here. The chorus in "Kavile Pattu" sing about the glorious state, position and period of the mother goddess in the distant or remote past. She used to get a "highly qualified" and ritually brought-up hero as her sacrificial victim.

The young hero is perfect in all respects: belonging to a noble family, trained in martial arts and shining with physical beauty and effulgence, with moral virtues like discipline, obedience, humility, devotion and courage. The Queens in A mil Moon in March and The King of the Great Clock Tower get degraded fellows like swineherds and strollers. They are uncommonly lusty and risk their lives in love of the Queens. The Pootam in "Poota Pattu" plays the role of a corrective force in society punishing the recalcitrant cowherds by sucking the milk of their cows and chewing the blood of wayward and lusty young men who engage themselves in suspicious nocturnal wanderings. The Queens indicate a period when the goddess possessed power to perform decapitation in public and the ritual dance of blood-bath.

The King in The King of the Great Clock Tower pertains to a stage in which the female's authority to immolate men is being eroded. The Queen has power but only to immolate a surrogate, not her current consort, the King. Even the good old days of the Pootam reveal a further deterioration of female dominance. She can drink blood and its surrogate-substitute, milk, on the condition 'Her sacrificial performance should be according to the existing patriarchal system or society.'

The Queen can kill the Swineherd; but, the dethroned queen or goddess, the Pootam, can drink the milk of the cows only when the cowherds do not tend the cows properly. The Pootam can come to the open only during nights. And the lady in "Her Vision in the Wood" can do so at midnight and stand upon the path in the woods, and she can only dream of men's blood. When the funeral procession of the male-victim is going on, the lady has to join and curse "the beast that gave the fatal wound" (CP 312), though the beast is herself. All the above works show that the power of



the mother goddess "the cut ths throats of thousands and drink blood" (ZK 509) was later questioned. The mothers in "Kavile Pattu" and "Poota Pattu," the King in The King of the Great Clock Tower and the people in "Her Vision in the Wood" question the authority of the goddess. The subversive signs of questioning, at first secret and then open, show the gradual advance of patriarchy and the retreat of matriarchy. The old order recedes to yield space to the new. The audacity of the Swineherd in A Full Moon in March and the presence of the patriarchal ruler, the King in The King of the Great Clock Tower, sound the notes of the crumbling of matriarchy. The male-heroes Congal and Cuchulain enter in The Eerne's Egg and AC the Hawk's Well to break and dismantle the last citadels of female centrality even in the remote parts of the world.

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