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Stoic Maternal Tribulations: Images of Motherhood in Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children, John Millington Synge's Riders to the Sea and Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve

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Abstract:

The theme of motherhood is dealt in this paper. It is a comparative study of three mother figures. It compares Maurya in J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Mother Courage in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* and Rukmani in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*. The study is to compare them with their love towards their children. It also explores the villains in the lives of these three mothers. Above all the paper attempts to compare them with the way they accept their misfortunes.

Despite the contextual disparities of Maurya, Mother Courage and Rukmani the common traits of motherhood bring them under one roof. Their social environments, means of livelihood, and the role of fate in their life, their character, and their religion all these are entirely different from each other. In spite of all these diversities, the mother in them is tinged with the hues of love, sacrifice, tolerance and patience. Thus the heart strings of these mothers pour out a symphony of universal motherhood.

Keywords: Archetype, Eternal, Miseries, Destiny, Sustainer.

On his ethereal canvas God painted a soul with the most beautiful colour in his colour-box. Around it he drew the picture of a woman and gave her the name 'MOTHER'. She is the beginning of all beginnings. The most melodious song is her lullaby; the sweetest nectar is what her bosom feeds; the smoothest touch is her pamper; the brightest sight is her smile; the nicest smell is her fragrance.

Mother is a woman first, and woman is a mother as soon as she is born. Psycho-culturally, the mother has a very strong and secure hold on human psyche. She is the repository of all positive values which influence the quality of life, and ultimately and substantively transform the society. She is symbolic of creativity and continuity; without her neither the people nor the culture can survive; without her, man's spiritual existence is nullified. Everything life-giving is the mother. In this sense the earth is always regarded as 'the mother earth'. She is the virgin soil, the source, the origin, the well-spring, the life-giver, the supporter, the sustainer, the nourisher and even more, the last resort, the consoler, the healer.

Mother is there from the very beginning of the universe. Biblical mother Eve is the mother of all living. The name Eve means LIFE! She was the beginning, the first woman, the originator of life apart from creation. In the Holy Bible it is said:

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore
Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD".
And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of
sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. (Genesis 4:1-2)

All human beings are sons and daughters of Eve. Eve was the first woman, the first wife, the first mother and the first grandmother.

Motherhood is ordinarily venerated, and the Greeks viewed the beginning of the world as a feminine creation. Robert Graves says:

"Eurynome, the Goddess of All Things rose naked from Chaos and
assuming the form of a dove, brooding on the waves and
in due process of time, laid the Universal Egg".

(Graves 28)

He explains the beginning of the world and describes the role which the elements played. "Father was not honored, the eating of beans, or accidental swallowing of an insect; inheritance was matrilineal..." (Graves 28) Like the Pelasgian creation myth, other myths like the Homeric, Orphic and Olympian creation myths also honor the Earth Mother of the goddess.

Traditionally mother in India is a revered figure; it is always the mother who comes first in the hierarchy of worship. The mother- principle is all pervasive. In everyday life India's rivers are "Ma", India herself is "Ma" and so is our planet earth- "Dharti Ma". Even the Goddess of art, music, knowledge and wealth in India are mothers- Lakshmi, Sharada, Saraswathi. In Legends and in Folk/ Fairy tales the benevolent elderly woman is always the personification of the mother. The Mother is highly respected in Indian culture and her image is buttressed by myth, legend, religion and tradition. She is liked to 'Sakti', all powerful protective mother goddess.

C.J.Jung in his famous book *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* speaks about the mother archetype. According to him like any other archetype, the mother archetype appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also the beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth. Other symbols of the mother in a figurative sense appear in things representing the goal of our longing for redemption, such as paradise, the kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe as for instance the church, university, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea, the moon etc. can be mother-symbols. The archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness.

Because of the protection it implies the magic circle or mandala can be a form of mother archetype. The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility.

In his Symbols of Transformation Jung has formulated the ambivalence of the mother archetype as the loving and the terrible mother. Perhaps the historical example of the dual nature of the mother most familiar to us is the Virgin Mary, who is not only Christ's mother, but also according to the medieval allegories, his cross.

In literature, the theme of motherhood has been dealt variously by different authors. Some mother figures are so skillfully depicted that they remain engraved upon the mind of the reader forever fresh. The American playwright Arthur Miller has given life to one of the unforgettable mother figures of the entire literature. Kate Keller in Miller's *All My Sons* have become an eternal mother in the world of letters. Grazia Deledda moved his pen for the creation of a tragic mother, Maria Maddelena in his work *The Mother*. The great Russian author Maximum Gorky in his novel *Mother*, has brought into being a revolutionary heroine, Pelagueya Vlasova who is also a loving mother for her son, Pavel Vlsou. The idea of a protective and warm-hearted mother is fashioned by Virginia Woolf in her novel *To the Light House* through the major character Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Gaskell's novel *Ruth* tells the story of Ruth Hilton whose redemption and elevation is brought about by her love for her children.

As soon as the rhythm of a little heart is heard within the womb, the anxieties of a mother sprout out. When the tiny toes touch the ground, a mother's heart knows no rest. Her body and mind spread the wings of ceaseless love and care. Her heart keeps on rolling the rosary beads of her love without the least notion of day and night. Until the last breath escapes from a mother's body her hands are forever stitching the blanket of security for her cherubins. The 'mother' is the ultimate word for spotless love.

In *Riders to the Sea*, J.M.Synge has unveiled a mother figure who is set against the all powerful sea. The play deals with the somber poetry of sea-faring life. Synge's *The Aran Islands* proves that on these Islands women live only for their children. He says:

“The maternal feeling is so powerful on these Islands that it gives a life of torment to the women. Their sons grow up to be banished as soon they are of age, or to live here in continual danger on the sea; their daughters go away also, or are worn out in their youth with bearing children that grow up to harass them in their own turn a little later”.

(Price 24)

This maternal feeling is strong in Maurya, the strong central life of *Riders to the Sea*. She is the mother whose purely human suffering is the pivotal point upon which the whole play revolves. Darrell Figgis says:

“We know, and are vitally interested in Macbeth, and his tragedy is poignant to us with a sense of personal loss. But we do not know Maurya thus. She is not a person to us. She is the soul of a mother set before a cliff of terror. We shudder for all mothers of Aran in her, whereas ‘Out, out, brief candle!’ comes to us from a man whose magnificence won us”. (Clark 38)

Maurya is a mother who has seen torrents of tragedies. When the play opens, Maurya is feeling miserable on account of her grief over the death of her son, Michael, a vague news of whose drowning in the sea had been received by her about nine days ago. Maurya no longer lives in her normal world of the island but in a world apart. She has been going to the seashore almost daily in order to see if Michael's dead body has been washed ashore. But having found no trace of it so far, she is feeling sore and bitter and is even unable to sleep.

Maurya's heart crumbles down when the last ‘rider’, Bartley sets out to the sea. Once she was the mother of six sons. Now Bartley is the last surviving male member of her family. Maurya, like any mother, tries hard to check Bartley's eternal parting. She raises no objections to his going. One is that, if Michael's body is washed up, there will be no man in the house to make the coffin. Her second objection is that everything points to an imminent storm on the sea and that Bartley will be risking his life by sailings. There was a star up against the moon during the night, and that is a sure indication of the weather becoming rough very soon. Her deep maternal affection comes out when she flings out the basic searching question:

“If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses, you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses, against a son where there is one son only?” (Synge 4)

This is the cry of an already shattered mother who cannot allow her son to join the riders to the sea. Maurya sees in the departure of Bartley the last piece of stability, of continuity, gone. She tells desperately that he is likely to be drowned during this trip, and she asks him what she and her two daughters, Cathleen and Nora will do for a living when he too is taken away by death. Maurya hopes that Bartley's love for his mother and sisters would prevent him from undertaking his perilous voyage to the Galway fair. Maurya pleads, using the whole set of her face and body. When Bartley still remains firm in his decision to go, she calls him a hard and cruel man. Something within Maurya tells her that Bartley will not

return alive. As Bartley is leaving, Maurya, the grief-stricken mother gives out the most touching expression which is smeared with despair and gloom. Like Cassandra she says:

“ He’s gone now, God spare us, and we’ll not see him again.

He’s gone now, and when the black night is falling I’ll have

no son left me in the world”.(Synge 5) Mother Courage owns a wagon which carries all kinds of miscellaneous goods available for sale to the soldiers participating in the war which is going on. She is the mother of three grown-up children Eilif, Swiss Cheese and dump Katrin. Each of her Children had different fathers.

The first instinct of her maternal love is seen when a recruiting officer tries to recruit her sons for a Swedish regiment. Like a hen that protects her chickens under its wings at the sight of an eagle, Mother Courage cries out to the officer who tries to hustle Eilif away: “Let him alone! He’s not for you” (Brecht 7)

She tries different methods to prevent the recruiting officer from carrying out his intention; she even threatens to attack him with a knife. In order to scare the sergeant, she says that she can foretell his future and then proceeds to employ the device of the drawing of lots. Then she plays the same trick on all her children, her real object in this case being to frighten all of them with the idea of their premature deaths and to discourage them from joining the army. But ultimately the recruiting officer is able to take away her- elder son, Eilif.

She is a mother who understands the nature and temperament of each of her children. About Eilif she says that he is too brave just as his father was, and that, if he does not use his head, he would die soon. Referring to her other son, namely Swiss Cheese, she says that he is too honest, and that he would meet a sad fate if he continues to be too honest, About Katrin, she says that she is too kind-hearted, and she urges the girl not to be too kind in the course of her life because too much kindness would destroy her. Just like Maurya, whose prediction about Bartley proves true, here Mother Courage’s analysis of her three children proves to be prophecies. Perhaps, through the bridge of love, these mothers are able to walk ahead to the destinies of their children.

Mother Courage meets Eilif after a lapse of two years. She is delighted to learn that he has distinguished himself in the war by his bravery. When Eilif finds her he embraces her happily. In her joy, she boxes his ear saying: “Didn’t I teach you to take care of yourself? You Finnish devil, you! ” (Brecht 19)

It will be wrong to say that she loves money above her children, or that she is a merchant first and a mother afterwards. When Swiss Cheese is about to lose his life, she decides to sell her canteen- wagon to raise enough money to bribe the catholic sergeant in order to save her son’s life. It is true that she wavers so much in coming to this decision that Swiss Cheese is executed before her decision can be carried into effect; but that is just her bad luck and not any unwillingness to make the sacrifice. After all, she was thinking of Katrin too while coming to a decision. And indeed one cannot ignore her constant solicitude

about the welfare of the dumb Kattrin. She warns Yvette, the prostitute against talking about her sordid love-affair in the presence of her impressionable and innocent daughter.

Rukmani had mixed feelings when the day of Ira's marriage came. She was happy that she had saved from the day of her birth so that she would marry well. She had enough stock of rice, dhal and ghee, jars of oil, betel leaf, areca nuts, chewing tobacco and copra. However, she was not without her disappointment. After Ira went with her bridegroom to her new house, Rukmani becomes the typical mother and thinks affectionately about her married daughter.

“For the first time since her birth, Ira no longer slept under our roof”. (Markandaya 38)

Rukmani has given birth and has known the intimate, umbilical bond of love that ties her to children. She is constantly vexed by her failure to feed them. But when she find Raja beaten to death, his limp, fragile body lain at her feet, her grief knows no bounds. The intensity of her sorrow and misery leaves her speechless. She ruminates:

“For this I have give birth my son, that you should lie in the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without meaning”(Markandaya 89)

Under the calm, composed self is found the smoldering embers of a mother's heart.

Selvam, the sixth son of Rukmani, did not take to farming. He decided to work in Kenny's hospital. Though Rukmani could not reconcile herself to this decision of Selvam, she yielded for her son's interest.

Kuti was the last child of Rukmani. She realized that after Kuti's birth there was a great transformation in Lra. She was happy with the child. But even while the ever anxious mother's bosom was worried about Ira's future. She says:

“How could I stop worrying? We had no money to leave her. Who would look after her when we were gone and the boys were married with families of their own? With a dowry it was perhaps possible she might marry again, without it no man would look at her, no longer a virgin and reputedly barren”

(Markandaya 62)

Rukmani remains a mother who understands the feelings of her children. She protects and nurtures her young even though the hard realities of life leave her traumatized. She is a typical Indian mother whose life revolves around her husband and her children.

The children of Maurya, Mother Courage and Rukmani are indeed lucky in that their mothers shower over them the dew- beads of pure love from the sky of their motherhood.

When compared with a man, a woman's feelings are always tender. If she is a mother, double is her tenderness. Hence hers is the most suffering soul when the tempestuous fire of misfortunes exterminate the fortune in her life. Only those mothers with a rare gift of intrepidity and a super human power of mind can endure the ill-luck of witnessing their dear ones slipping through their fingers.

In Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya's heart is broken with the most fearful sight. As she communicates it and the interpretation of life it leads to, she gets beyond personal grief and becomes a superhuman figure, representative of all Island women, and finally, of all humanity. Her calm acceptance of her new disaster is indeed amazing. When Bartley's body is brought to the house, Maurya's tragedy is almost complete. But contrary to the usual practice of uttering loud lamentations, tearing the hair or beating the breast, Maurya proves herself to be an extraordinary mother. She does not breakdown, or collapse or faint as would have happened with any ordinary mother.

Maurya, like a priest taking her place at the altar, bows, kneels by Bartley's head and conducts the requiem. In a stoic mood she gives out magnificent speeches. But her words do not plumb emotional depths. According to R.L. Collins,

They are not the direct lament of "Absalom! Oh, my son Absalom!" or the five-fold "never" of Lear; they are the circumscribed grief of one in sackcloth and ashes-mourning in a prescribed, ritualistic manner". (Clark 44)

Maurya expresses her spirit of endurance and her acceptance of whatever has happened now and whatever had happened in the past. In the face of the final tragedy of her life, namely the death of Bartley, she consoles herself with the thought that the worst is over for her and that now she has nothing to fear from the sea. She is beyond the reach of any earthly sorrow.

"They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me....." (Synge 12)

These are the words of a mother who is beyond an ordinary man's understanding. The sea has proved to be her great enemy but it will no longer be able to do any harm to her. Now Maurya is actually challenging the unfathomable depths which has no other choice but to bow before her dignity.

It is indeed a brave deed from a mother to sprinkle the Holy Water over the dead body of her son. We perceive this rare sight in *Riders to the Sea*. Sprinkling the Holy drops, Maurya addresses Bartley and says:

“It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God.

It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't

know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and its time, surely”. (Synge 13)

Maurya's life has been a long prayer for her sons. The desperate state of a mother who has lived in perpetual uncertainty about the fate of her children is over now. Her long battle with sea comes to an end.

Maurya puts the empty cup of Holy Water on the table, she lays her hands together on Bartley's feet and invokes the mercy of God on Bartley's soul, on Michael's soul, on the souls of her other dead sons. She never forgets to invoke God's mercy on her own soul and on the souls everyone who is left living in the world. Maurya is no longer simply a mother mourning the death of her sons; she is a visionary facing death itself, resentful and angry, terrified, bitter and finally resigned. We see in Maurya a peace which is close to emotional exhaustion, literally 'calm of mind, all passion spent'. Her last speech indicates that she has fully reconciled to her terrible fate.

“Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the

Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white

boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than

that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied”.

(Synge 14)

This rare philosophy of a rare mother is truly rare in the pages of literature. It is remarkable that this peasant woman should display such strange fortitude and spirit of endurance in the face of the catastrophes which have befallen her household. Nothing but true admiration goes to this mother heart which is capable of tolerating whatever fate decrees. Maurya like job finds at last in humanity and endurance a dignity and greatness of spirit.

Goddess Mars washes her sword in the tears of mothers. But she fails to do this in the case of Mother Courage. A woman, who loses her three children, one after the other, and is able to recover from each of the shocks which fate administers to her, cannot but be thus designated. Mother Courage is one of the worst victims of war. Yet the way in which she pulls the wagon of her life through the most depressing ordeals is astonishing. Though she is most disappointed when Eilif has been taken away to be recruited in the army, within the wink of an eye, her sudden unbelievable acceptance comes through her words, “You must help your brother now, Katrin” (Brecht 12)

Her attitude is the same stoicism when she learns that Swiss Cheese has been executed. On this occasion she simply says that she had haggled for too long over the amount of the bribe to be paid to the Catholic sergeant. She is of such a heroic stuff that she acts like

a stranger when her son's body is brought before her for identification. Had not this mother hardened her heart at that moment, she would have cried out his name and that would have jeopardized the lives of Katrin and the Chaplain, besides her own.

When a mother loses her children one by one, she hugs her remaining child close to her heart. Psychologically this is the reason for Maurya's desperate attempt to check Bartley's journey. As Mother Courage is left with Katrin alone, she puts more care for her. When she goes to the town she finds her daughter lying dead. Oddly enough she does not indulge in any wailing or lamentations, but at the suggestion of the peasant family, gets ready to follow a Protestant regiment. She also gives money to the peasants for the proper burial of Katrin. Towards the end of the play Mother Courage resolves to start her business afresh. Harnessing herself to the wagon, she says: "I hope I can pull the wagon by myself. Yes, I'll manage, there's not much in it now. I must start up again in business". (Breacht 81)

This is indeed a strange reaction from a mother who has now been cut off from her last bond of blood. Mother Courage proves to be a real courageous and practical mother when she quickly recovers from her grief and determines to drag her wagon along a path which is glittered with the red rubies of her children. Here Mother Courage emerges as one of the most formidable women characters that the world of letters has ever encountered. Nothing quenches her spirit of life and her philosophy seems to be this- life must go on despite all the tragedies. This mother figure never gives room for any despair. This heroic attitude towards life raises her above average motherhood.

William Blake in his *Infant Sorrow*:

My mother groaned! my father wept.

Into the dangerous world I leapt

Helpless, naked, piping loud:

Like a fiend hiding in a cloud.

Sorrowing in my father's hands,

Striving against my swaddling bands

Bound and weary I thought best

To sulk upon my mother's breast. (1-8)

In this poem Blake conjures up for us the sense of the child-what it feels like to be born into this world. When compared with his pre-natal situation, he is helpless and disturbed in his post-natal situation. But for the mother it is one of the happiest moments of her life. Motherhood is essentially one of the brightest pages of a woman's life.

Maurya, Mother Courage and Rukmani are three mother figures in literature who bloomed from the fertile imaginations of an Irish, German and an Indian. These women live in three different regions and situations. Their cultures, manners and attitudes are diverse.

The people of Aran Islands are half-fisherman and half-peasants. The instructions that Bartley gives to his sisters before leaving home clearly points to the occupations which the people of this land pursue to earn their living. He tells them to take care that their sheep do not jump into the field of rye. He tells them to sell the pig with the black feet if they can get a good price for it. He tells them also collect enough kelp from the seashore. As for Bartley himself, he finds it necessary to visit the mainland in order to sell the red mare and the grey pony which the family owns. Mother Courage appears in a totally different milieu. We see this mother and her children in battle fields. Unlike Maurya, Mother Courage does not have permanent house. She is a business woman. She travels along with the army pulling her canteen wagon which serves as a liquor-bar as well as a shop selling miscellaneous goods to the soldiers. It does not have a particular destination. While Maurya's family earns its livelihood through fishing and farming, Mother Courage lives on the profits which she makes from sale her goods in the course of the war. Rukmani and Nathan lead a life of contentment in the soil. As farmers, they till the land, water the plants and manure the crops in a joint venture hoping for a rich harvest. Besides the grains that they get from the harvest they owned their own ploughing bullocks and a milch goat. Rukmani herself planted pumpkin seeds, beans, sweet potatoes, brinjals and chilies behind their hut and they grew well under her care.

From the beginning of *Riders to the Sea* Maurya is in constant terror of the sea. Mother Courage is very vigilant over her all possessions including her children because such is her surroundings. But until the calamities stepped into her hut Rukmani of *Nectar in a Sieve* was fortunate enough to lead a calm and peaceful life. She describes her blissful state.

While the sun shines on you and the fields are green
and beautiful to the eye, and your husband sees beauty
in you which no one has seen, before, and you have a
good store of grain laid away for hard times, a roof
over you and sweet stirring in your body, what more
can a woman ask for? (Markandaya 7)

Mother Courage is a highly complex figure. The key to her character lies in her self-contradictoriness. She is intelligent yet blind, indomitable yet cowardly, self-regarding yet unselfish, realistic yet unsuccessful. The chief contradiction in her character is her opposition to war. When the war has stopped because of the sudden death of king Gustavus, she deplors the fact and tells the cook that the return of peace has "broken her neck" (Brecht 58). It is because she disapproves of the return of peace and expresses a strong preference for the war that the Chaplain calls her "a hyena of the battlefield" (Brecht 60). And yet it is at this very

point that, replying to the Chaplain, she says: “There isn’t much love lost between me and the war” (Brecht 60). Her desire for the continuance of the war only shows a desire for her own and her dumb daughter’s survival. Apart from being the means of their livelihood, the war is something which she detests and hates. Hence she cries out one time “Curse the war” (Brecht 55). Mother Courage possesses some other qualities which are absent in Maurya and Rukmani. She has a strong sense of humour and she has also the capacity to make witty and sarcastic remarks. She shows this quality in the opening scene when she has to deal with the recruiting officer and the sergeant. Her conversations with the cook and sergeant point towards this equality. The best example of her wit is to be found in the manner in which she describes the misbehavior of the soldiers when, after days of starvation, they get the opportunity to plunder a town. She says:

“For weeks on end, no grub. Then when they get some
by way of plunder, they jump on top of the women folk”.

(Brecht 28)

Maurya does not possess great contradictions in her character, the only one being her inclination towards the pagan beliefs although she is a Christian. Rukmani has no fluctuations, she is a firm character.

While Maurya is the victim of fate, Mother Courage is no mere victim of fate. War is not a natural catastrophe, it is man-made. Rukmani is victim of both industrialization which is man-made and natural calamities which is a play of fate.

Mother Courage emerges Sphinx- like from the ashes of her sufferings and decides to win over her destiny. Her harnessing herself to the wagon towards the end of the play indicates her decision. From her miseries she seems to acquire more and more courage to go on living. Merely to call her a “hyena of the battlefield” (60) or to describe her as mother Niobe would not do. She is much more than these two. She evades classification.

Rukmani’s intense involvement with life and the depth in her character have helped her to create a philosophy of life. She believes that in tolerance, endurance and mute suffering man is purged of all guilt and sin and he emerges a purified being; his soul is cleansed of all earthly bondages. This mystic and philosophical truth comes to her not through learning, but from a profound insight, depth of character and richness of experience. The way in which Rukmani emerges from a twelve year old bride to a universal mother figure is simply amazing. Her attitude of acceptance, which has been maintained all through her life, is a mystery because most of the time it is inexplicable. As Rukmani passes through the trials of life, a deep humanitarian concern is developed in her. It is this concern and her universal motherhood that attracts Puli towards her. She feels a spontaneous affection and love for the destitute, leprosy- stricken boy and takes him immediately into her protective fold. She says:

“I could not help feeling a vague responsibility which

certainly I knew I was in no position to fulfill" (Markandaya 171)

She gets him cured of his disease, and infuses meaning into his life. From her burning experiences she emerge to the philosophy that life is for living, and when the going gets tough the human mind must draw strength from an unambiguous acceptance of the inescapable. Not to break up or destroy, but to persist with and to rebuild is what life is about. Not self – pity but self –esteem is what human existence must drive its sustenance from. Rukmani is endowed with an awareness of the possibilities of life. For her the act of living is important: life is important. Rukmani's words about Puli points towards her aspiration to regenerate and reconstruct a new world order where all the polarities are reconciled and the sharp edges of life are blunted.

Despite all the dissimilarities that occur in the life of these three mothers, they join hands in that they have faced the same ordeals in life. The calamities suffered by Maurya, Mother Courage and Rukmani are the same calamities faced by any present world mothers.

Across the lands, the fragrance of motherhood is the same. It has some common traits which are painted with the hues of love, sacrifice, tolerance and patience. Maurya, Mother Courage and Rukmani are immersed in these colours. Here when the curtain slowly falls down, these three mother figures, breaking the fences of their nationalities stand together in the spot light of universal motherhood.

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