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### Literature is an Expression of Social Reality: Mother's Unparalleled Love

(Echoes from select poems of Ann Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Lola Ridge and Nissim Ezekial)

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#### Abstract

Literature is the reflection of life and society is an embodiment of life. Literature mirrors society and the society is the cause for evolution of literatures. A society refers to people related to each other in terms of culture, custom, tradition and values. Literature and society are indivisible. Literature is a medium through which the realities of society are expressed. The thought and ideas expressed through writing is naturally the account of one's experience that forms the basis for universality. Personal experiences can never always be personal whereas, it the tone of the society. This study accounts the unparalleled love of motherhood from the select poems of Ann Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Lola Ridge and Nissim Ezekial's *My Mother*, *Mother O' Mine*, *Mother and Night of the Scorpion* respectively. The study highlights the unparalleled love of the mother or motherhood as one of the universal social reality.

Keywords : Literature, Society, Mother, Love, Universality.

#### Full paper

Love is divine and innate. Love can neither be created nor destroyed. Love is a common thread that unifies all living creations. Love can be classified into various types. Whatever might be the multiplicity of the nature of love, Mother's love remains indomitable. It is the only love that surpasses all categories of affection. Mother is a mantra involuntarily uttered by every individual in all kinds of situations, irrespective of age, as she is an embodiment of inner consciousness. In one of the great musicians - Ilayaraja's song, he writes that there is no life without uttering AMMA. So mother means life and life after birth becomes incomplete in itself without mother.

**Ann Taylor**, an English poet and a critic was born in Islington and was brought up in London. Her poems are direct and simple and worthy of understanding the depth of thought portrayed. **Rudyard Kipling** – the noble prize winner was an English Journalist, Poet, Short story writer and a novelist. He was born in India. He was chiefly remembered for writings for children and support for British Imperialism. **Lola Ridge** was a poet born in Dublin, Ireland. Ridge was selfless and earnest in her contribution to the working poor and the new literature. Nissim Ezekial was an Indian Jewish poet, playwright, editor and critic. He is a well known writer of English poems in Indian writing in English. His poems deal with various themes like love, loneliness, sex and death.

Literature reflects society and the sense and sensibilities of the society are expressed through writings. This study envisages the unparalleled love of motherhood portrayed in the select poems of Ann Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Lola Ridge and Nissim Ezekial's *My Mother*, *Mother O' Mine*, *Mother and Night of the Scorpion* respectively. Theodore Waters in his article learning to love writes

Over 100 years ago, Sigmund Freud, discoverer of the unconscious mind and inventor of psychoanalysis, suggested that the roots of love are not in the trial and error or even in successes and failures of adolescence. He theorized that the roots of love are in infancy. The roots of love are in our early experiences. The roots of love are in our mothers arms (Waters, 1).

The mother's arm is the birthplace of one's experience of love. An infant comes to know the meaning of love and experiences it only in the mother's arms. This experience becomes an eternal. TAIWO MAKINDE in his article Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment of Women in Yoruba Culture presents mother as very precious through the following song

Iya ni wura Baba ni dingi

Meaning: Mother is gold Father is a mirror

Even in songs, mother is rated as precious gold:

Iya ni wura iyebiye- Ti a ko le f'owora-O l'oyun mi f'osu mesan-O pon mi f'odun meta-Iya ni wura iyebiye-Ti a ko le f'owora

Meaning : Mother is a precious gold That cannot be purchased with money. She carried me in her womb for nine months. She nursed me for three years Mother is a precious gold That cannot be purchased with money. (Makinde, 165)

Mother is precious not only in Yoruba culture in Nigeria, mother tends to be precious everywhere. The above mentioned song highlights the fact that mother carries her baby for nine months in her womb and nurses for three month, which is physical. Talking about the emotional segment of a mother, her touch is throughout life. Mother cannot be purchased likewise mother is irreplaceable and unsubstituted by any. Physical imbalances and uncertainties are curable and mendable but it is the emotional carry through that matters a lot.

Ann Taylor in her poem *My Mother* is very possessive and clear about the reality that mother is a mother none can take place. She begins her poem in an interrogative tone and the answer follows – "My Mother".

Who sat and watched my infant head

When sleeping on my cradle bed,

And tears of sweet affection shed?

My Mother.

When pain and sickness made me cry,  
Who gazed upon my heavy eye,  
And wept for fear that I should die?  
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray  
And love God's holy book and day,  
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?  
My Mother. (Taylor 1-12)

Taylor tries to elicit response for the interrogation she tries put forth and she is very much confirmed that it can never be anybody else other than one's mother. The qualities of the mother are expressed in the way of interrogation to kindle the thought process of the reader to fathom the hidden love behind a mother's look, tears, heart and wisdom.

The echoes about the mother's love are well brought out by Rudyard Kipling in his thought provoking, sensible poem *Mother O' Mine*. He writes as follows :

If I were hanged on the highest hill,  
*Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
I know whose love would follow me still,  
*Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
If I were drowned in the deepest sea,  
*Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
I know whose tears would come down to me,  
*Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*  
If I were damned of body and soul,  
I know whose prayers would make me whole,  
*Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!* (Kipling 1-11)

In midst of catastrophe, danger and ailment, the only soul who never abhors, never dejects or rejects, never disappoints and never departs is THE MOTHER. Wherever one goes, in whatever danger one is and in whatever state one is destined – the person to be beside or the person wished to stay beside is THE GREAT MOTHER. Kipling says, be it getting hanged or be it getting drowned and be it getting damned, it is the love, tears and the prayers of the mother that follows, comes down and makes everything whole. This is a social reality. One needs mother beside in all times of need is the well experienced reality of all human kind. Lola Ridge in his poem *Mother* is very precise regarding the exceptional characteristics of a mother. He writes Your love was like moonlight turning harsh things to beauty, so that little wry souls reflecting each other obliquely as in cracked mirrors. beheld in your luminous spirit their own reflection, transfigured as in a shining stream. (Ridge 1-8)

It is the love of the mother that serves to be the stress buster, when harsh things in life come to pass. Dry souls find meaning, disfigured souls find transfiguration and distorted souls find shape in mother's love. It is the unfading love of the mother that shines the fade, dull life.

The intensity of the selfless love of the motherhood is well brought out by Nissim Ezekial in the last few lines of his poem *Night of the Scorpion*:

I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation.  
After twenty hours  
it lost its sting.  
My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children. (Ezekial 42-48)

Mother is full of praise and gratitude towards God for the very reason that the scorpion troubled her and not the children.

What a selfless love this is! Dr. Naveen K Mehta in his article on Portrayal of Motherhood states:

A scorpion has stung the poet's mother. To cure her, all sorts of treatment are tried, but she gets better only after twenty hours, almost naturally. The poet described the pains, agonies, and sufferings of the mother minutely. During the twenty hours the poet's mother suffered a lot but the poet's mother kept sublime and generous qualities of a mother. It is revealed when his mother became well again and she thanked God for sparing her children from the vicious bite of the scorpion. (Mehta, 2)

The discussed innate qualities of a mother are real and true in every mother. Such qualities cannot be faked or artificialized. They are natural artifact of God's creation. Mr. Rajendra Tambile says that,  
The entire poem may be taken as a tribute to the selfless love of a mother. (Tambile, 43)

When a woman grows into a mother, the attribute of selfless love becomes a part of their values as they are able to welcome and accept happily, the new life circumstances. Nobody is a born mother but everyone becomes. Constance.A. Barlow and Kathleen.V.Cairns advocates 'New Life Circumstances'. They say

Committing to new life circumstances was defined as the affective, cognitive and behavioural engagement of mother with child and was characterized by emerging dedication to new life circumstances. This growing commitment was influenced by

a strong awareness of responsibility for the child and an increasing sense of self-efficacy and specialness. A participant stated that, "You look at this baby and you think, I'm responsible, and then nothing is ever the same again. It's not like a dread looming. It wasn't a bad thing, it was just a sort of acceptance of responsibility." and, "That little baby needed something from me that only I could give him, and that was the most wonderful feeling in the world."(Barlow & Cairns, 238)

The commitment and the responsibility for the child mould a woman into a mother who is a symbol of selfless love. The response of a mother within the inverted comma brings out the idea of responsibility that gives rise to selfless loving and affection. Adaptation to the new life circumstance is a special quality that a woman acquires to become an eligible mother. The process of self-socialization included developing a repertoire of effective parenting skills, and was characterized by active striving to adapt to the mothering role.(Barlow & Cairns, 238)

The aspect of self-socialization and self-actualization are the major contributors in developing responsible and selfless mothers, who respond to the expectations of the children. This reality can be expressed only through writings. Dr. Roshni Duhan states

No writer can escape influence of his age. Every man, according to Goethe's statement, is the citizen of his age as well as of his country. Renan remarked: —One belongs to one's century and race, even when one reacts against one's century and race. Thus literature always expresses the thoughts and sentiments of human mind which are closely connected with and conditioned by the age. The influence of the age on the human mind is due to the fact that the latter is constantly influenced by the spirit of the age and reacts to it vividly and vigorously.(Duhan, 193)

The study on Mother's unparalleled love is beyond the spirit and the condition of the age as it is a universal value and a part of every individual's life. This social reality is an expression of experienced attribute that forms the integral value system of all the families. This is the major reason why the selected poets are found to be very intimate and possessive in their expressions regarding their experience with their mothers. Their expressions were very real, as their words show unity of thoughts, which forms the expression of their feelings and values. Thus literature is simply a mirror of life, a reproduction and obviously a social document. (Duhan, 201)

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