



Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

Vol: 2(1), 2020

REST Publisher

ISBN No: 978-81-936097-3-6

Website: <http://restpublisher.com/book-series/cllrm/>

Juxtaposition of Biblical Character Ruth with Neoteric Muliebrity

Premraj R

Department of English and Other Foreign Languages, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Ramapuram, Chennai.
premabragham@gmail.com

Introduction

This research paper portrays a few biblical characters in the Book of Ruth and their comparison with the present generation. The book of Ruth which was written between sixth and fourth centuries circa is still a life lesson to the present generation. The character Elimallech, in the book of Ruth, lives with his wife Naomi and two sons named Mahlon and Chilion. They move to Moab because of famine in Israel. After a few years in Moab, Elimallech dies. Later, Mahlon and Chilion marry two Moabite women Ruth and Orpah. After about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion die. The Three widows Naomi, Ruth and Orpah are left alone in Moab. Naomi in despair, feels cursed as she has no future. She decides to return to the land of Judah and persuades her two daughters-in-law to go back to their mother's home, if not; they would be consigned to the hopeless fate which Naomi is undergoing. The two daughters-in-law weep aloud and decide not to leave their mother-in-law alone. Then Orpah kisses her mother-in-law and bids farewell but Ruth remonstrates Naomi's decision and cling on to her. Now these two lonely widows Naomi and Ruth decide to lead a sacrificial life by 'yearning' to live for each other. Naomi strives desperately to secure her daughters-in-law for a life of joy and fellowship at the price of her deepest solitude. So, Naomi advises Ruth to leave her and get back to her people in Moab in order to find a better opportunity among their own people. Ruth refuses to leave her Mother-in-law and says:

"Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people shall be my people,
And your God, my God.
Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me and more also,
If anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16, 17 NKJV)

The duty of a daughter-in-law for all generations is portrayed in the above quoted words of Ruth. **Ruth's passionate burst of tenderness to follow her mother-in-law defies human logic. As a young woman, her words not only show deep and tender love** to Naomi but also confess her inner longing to unite with the people of Israel. According to *the Book of Judges*, Moabites were in conflict with the Israelites. Israelites were not allowed to pass through the land of the Moabites. In *Deuteronomy 23:3*, Moses said to the people of Israel that Moabite or any of their descendants should not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation. In *Numbers 25*, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel because they began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab and worshiped the Moabite god Baal Peor. The Lord commands Moses to obliterate the Moabite influence; "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." (*Numbers 25:4 NKJV*). Such a history should have 'stopped' any Moabite to enter Israel's borders. Ruth knew the tumultuous history these nations shared, but she vows to choose the joyless part of choosing a widow as a companion in a strange land and enemies of her country. This relationship exemplifies the 'truth and trust' between a daughter-in-law and a Mother-in-law. The three widows Naomi, Ruth and Orpah did not run out of relationship but decided to be together even after losing their husbands. They decided to stay together to make their life financially stable without a man in a man's world. When Naomi was preparing to leave Moab, both the Moabite daughters-in-law supported Naomi. They would have said no but they made a decision to respect the choice of their mother-in-law to move. When their husbands die, the relationship between the three widows grows stronger. The love and kindness exhibited by the Mother-in-law Naomi prompts both the Moabite daughters-in-law to follow her. "She kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept" (Ruth 1:9 NKJV) Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law and wept together. We can see the emotional bond and also the relationship between Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Naomi shows herself noble in striving to secure her daughters-in-law at the price of her own deepened solitude.

Ruth's commitment goes beyond the death of her husband Mahlon and accepted his family as her own. Not all daughters-in-law commit to their mother-in-law at the risk of giving everything in their life. Ruth totally commits to Naomi on her own interest. "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you...." (Ruth 1:16 NKJV) has become words of distinctions; it is far deeper than a close woman-to-woman affection and a friendly feeling to her Mother-in-law. Ruth

persuades Naomi not to stand against her interest but to allow her to do the duty as a daughter-in-law. The strongest emotion of Ruth is blended in her words to her Mother-in-law which epitomizes the 'real love between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law', which can fit all generations'. A noble love and self-sacrifice of Ruth shows in her words to Naomi; "For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge." (Ruth 1:16 NKJV). Ruth was ready to share the sufferings of Naomi and profoundly says that Naomi is her home. "Your people shall be my people, your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16 NKJV). Ruth started accepting Naomi's relatives in Israel as her own. Ruth extended her relationship with her husband's family even though her husband was not alive. The above stated verse is used in the Christian Wedding often. The biblical understanding of wedding is uniting two families. It still exists in Christianity and the Christian law teaches the adaptation of young women with her husband's family. Ruth was an idolater from foreign land but adheres to worship and serve the God of Abraham, Isaac and Moses, because of her love for mother-in-law Naomi. The character of Ruth shows the acceptance of her late husband's homeland.

In the following verse, Ruth emphasizes her desire to give all her life time to her mother-in-law. "Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried." (Ruth 1:17 NKJV). This verse clearly states that even her dead body should not be carried to Moab but be buried in the same grave, 'mingled with the bones' as they may rise and remain together forever, of her Mother-in-law. This unconditional love for a mother-in-law is a burning example for all generations. Ruth in her concluding statement makes a solemn oath that "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:17 NKJV) Death may part Naomi and Ruth but her kindness to her family and people of Israel remains the same. Her final statement gives assurance to Naomi that she would carry forward their family values until death "do them part".

When a woman enters a new life after marriage, she sees an ordinary remark of a mother-in-law in a new dimension. Acceptance and Adaptability are paramount for a daughter-in-law in her in-laws place. When a son gets married, 'fear' grips the mother and she feels insecure, and becomes very possessive which could irk any daughter-in-law. A girl come from a different culture, lifestyle and religion, should not be blamed for not adapting towards their culture. Ruth's character is a lesson for compassion, honesty, integrity, generosity, honor and kindness. The present generation can learn the act of obedience from the book Ruth. Due to the influence of modern 'individualistic' society and a change in the life style, the bonding between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is very negligible. This unfailing love, obedience and sacrifice even in the time of bitterness is a lesson one can learn from the characters of Ruth and Naomi, which would help the neoteric muliebrity to build their family relationship forever.

References

- [1]. Holy Bible, New King James Version. Thomas Nelson, 1982
- [2]. Biblical Lesson from Ruth for Daughter-in-law <http://www.mothersinlawrejoice.com/biblical-lessons-ruth-daughters-law-lynn-autry/>. Accessed 17 Sept. 2020.