

NEOTERIC READING OF WILLE ZUM LEBEN AND ITS VORSTELLUNG IN SARA JOSEPH'S GIFT IN GREEN.

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Abstract

Gift in Green is largely conceived as a fiction emoting ecological reverberations. From the title of the novel to the content it unfolds, the novel showcases the subject of nature vividly. Novel's commitment to environmentalism is being questioned through this study using the concept of Wille zum Leben propounded by Arthur Schopenhauer. This work tries to prove that the endeavors of a human is backed by his Wille zum Leben or will to live. When we look at literature as a medium that is capable of addressing the unresolved mysteries in the society often finding solutions, a final escape from these dilemmas are possible only if the focus is the genuine reason behind it. Whatever be the problem that a man creates, the sole force that drives human activities ahead is Schopenhauer's Wille zum Leben. The study finds that beyond environmental concerns it is the will to live represented by the characters that drives the plot ahead. And the over-pervading theme, environmentalism is only subservient to the concept, Wille zum Leben.

Key words: environmentalism, Wille zum Leben, will to live, innerste, vorstellung.

Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* was material to many critical evaluations such as analysis of its ecocritical elements, environmentalism, contemporaneity and the like. No studies have taken into regard the trope of will to live or Wille zum Leben in the face of human interference in nature that upsets the balance of the ecosystem. The study examines Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green* focusing on the will and it's representation in the theory propounded by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. The study examines Wille zum Leben as manifested by the prominent characters in the novel and also the people of Aathi. Different characters in the novel exhibit the will to live differently and the study examines various mechanisms and responses adopted by them briefly.

One among several characters who exhibit the will to live which is evident through the representations in life is Kunjimathu's father. He is a person who keeps close connection with nature which is exemplified through the conduct of his life itself. What motivates him to lead a life in communion with nature is undoubtedly the trope, Wille zum Leben. This blind incessant impulse without knowledge that can drive instinctive behaviors causing insatiable striving in human existence is what leads Kunjimathu's father till the very end. Why he wants to marry his pretty daughter to "one who took pride in working, heart and soul, with earth and water" (Joseph 20), can be taken as a representation of his will to live, in his case is the preservation of the serenity of land and water he owns. He says: "She is my only child. I don't have a clutch of daughters. All my belongings - my land and water - are hers. I have trained her well to take care of them. Even so she needs a companion. But it has to be someone whose work improves the land, and not a "magistrate" who would be a fish out of water in this place" (20).

The rationale why he values his land and water is a representation of his will to live, since he is a person who believes that water and earth are the primary elements which are absolutely necessary for a human being to live. "He belonged to a generation for whom the water had been salted by the rain of human sweat and not by the swell and sweep of the sea" (20). In the words of Schopenhauer one's life reflects one's will and the reason of the the suffering of any thought also is Wille zum Leben. Here Kunjumathu's father has a feeling of insecurity regarding the preservation of his water and earth. This can be taken as a suffering he has in his life which is triggered by the Will. This is also the very reason that prompts him to marry his daughter to a man who can guard the pristineness of the primordial place.

Kunjimathu's Wille zum Leben is evident in her statement: "Water knows everything and forgets nothing" (21). From her thoughts, actions and dreams, it is quite clear that what she really needs is to live in a place which is unpolluted and free from human interference. Her unflinching adherence to the elements of nature, water and earth is an excuse which originates from her Will. That is the reason why she stands neck deep in water to protest against the acts of Kumaran in the name of development. The activity she indulged in and the thought to draw attention of the people to the problem in this manner can be taken as mechanisms adopted by her to satisfy her Wille zum Leben. Kunjimathu is able to convince the people of the locality about the impending dangers. It is evident from their opinion: "Kunjimathu is absolutely right in what she says. If this goes on, how are we to work and earn our lively hood? If the high tide and low tide are walled out, can we ever farm fish or pokkali rice" (204).

Like her father "rice, fish, water paddy fields, the lake and marshes dotted with dappled pullichembu: these completed her world more or less" (21). She considered Kumaran as the man of her life. And it is because of the blind and unconscious nature of the concept of Wille zum Leben that Kunjimathu couldn't recognize Kumaran. That's why "it puzzled and provoked Kunjumathu: what did Kumaran lack here? Even if you fished only till noon, you could make enough to feed a whole family. Fish or mussels: enough to meet one's daily needs" (20). Kumaran cheated his father, sold the property to Muhammed Kannu and left for the city. Kunjimathu bought back the property with the money and gold, her father had reserved for her wedding. It is her fear of the loss of sanctity of her homeland that forced her to purchase the sold property from Muhammed Kannu. She was able to garner the support of even those who came to prevent her from fasting. Her dedication to nature which is shown through her protests against land filling and erasing water beds are all representations of her Wille zum Leben, at the same time a mechanism also.

Her will is manifested even through her dream. Kunjimathu saw a dream in which she saw Kumaran standing in the prawn farm asking Kunjimathu to sell her five acres of land to him. "Kunjimathu, at sweet seventeen, stood enjoying the fragrance of the paddy field, ripe and ready for the harvest. The sweet aroma of her body carassed the water tenderly. Tiny fingerlings darted and danced all around her. The birds that came to peck the grain perched themselves on her shoulders. The sight of Kumaran terrified Kunjimathu, the birds and the fingerlings alike" (170). The reason of fear at the entry of Kumaran in her dream is a representation of her intuition which is again the manifestation of her will. Her innerste or innermost nature is aware of Kumaran's potential for the destruction of her water and earth. That is why in the dream it is reflected even through the response of birds and fingerlings.

Dinakaran, Ponmani and Karthiayani mirror different manifestations of their Wille zum Leben. Dinakaran's adherence to his soil can be regarded as a response that arises due to his fear of losing Aathi by the activities of Kumaran. His will to live prevents him from engaging in any activities that can pollute his soil. His talk on desires of man is a result of the influence of wille zum Leben on him. He says:

We were leading a peaceful life, harming no one, nor stealing from anybody's plate. All we had was what we had earned by the sweat of our brow. The poverty that plagued our ancestors is still with us.... if they had indulged themselves, scooping up and swallowing everything, not looking beyond themselves, wouldn't we have been poorer than they were. They had their desires. We have ours: desires big and small. It is not wrong to harbour desire. But we had better be in our guard when our desires become too big to carry and so inflated that we cease to care for the needs of our own children. (204)

Dinakaran is a person who is contented and satisfied with the resources of Aathi. It's quite evident that his will to live revolves around the possibility and standard of life in Aathi. That is the reason why he joins the protest of Kunjimathu. The mechanism he adopts is simply standing by the side of the one who is right as per his conscience and here that one is Kunjumathu. That is why he comments: "For us the land means a great deal more than this calculation of profit and loss. The land is the warmth of our heart! We know the land with our hearts, not with our heads. It is not in us to cheat the land we have known in the marrow of our bones. Therefore, I tell you, what Kunjimathu stands for is the truth: the truth of Aathi, the truth by which we live" (205).

Shailaja's characterization is a perfect example for Schopenhauer's theory of Wille zum Leben. In the chapter 'The Bride Goes Back Virgin' Shailaja is portrayed as a newly married woman to Chakkam Kandam. On the very first day of her marriage she is horrified by the sight of the wells, ponds, the channels and other water bodies of Chakkam Kandam all covered with layer upon layer of shit. Her decision to go back to her native land Aathi can be taken as representation of her will to live in a neat environment. The reason why she bothers too much to the comments of the womenfolk on the unhygienic condition of the place, that too on the very day of her marriage with Chandramohan is a reflection of her innerste which comes out of her will to live. It was completely disquieting for Shailaja to notice that none of her relatives would eat a morsel of food from Chandramohan's house. " At the time of parting, she had promised, her hair let down that of a heroine in an ancient tale, 'The day the water of Chakkam Kandam clears , I shall return.' (228)." This declaration can be regarded as a manifestation of her will to live and one can't find any dedication to nature here. The climax of her story is also an evidence that it is not her love or dedication to nature that is the reason of her choice of land to live but her own desire or will to live well, that prompts her to choose the same. She only wanted to embrace the luxuries which are part and parcel of Aadhi. Although she returns to Aathi, a place where she can meet all her requirements to live, in the end we find her getting ready to go back to Chakkam Kandam. Her decision to go back is an evidence of the potential of Wille zum Leben inside her. By that time Aadhi had lost its past glory. It was once "... the land of pure water springs, clear streams and pristine waterbodies (230)". But now, "worms wiggled in her drinking, the drawing bucket of her well lay rusted, it's coir rope eaten by termites. Her meals were feasts for flies. Rats that came swimming, no, crawling, on the thick, gluey water had colonised her bedroom. The doves had departed from her roof.... she had been robbed of her identity.... (229-30)". No longer can she take pride of her own self if she continued to remain in Aadhi. This is the reason why she requests Chandramohan to take her to that once cursed land. This is a strategy she adopts to please her Wille zum Leben.

The girl Noor Muhammad follows can also be read in this regard. The girl is portrayed as one who is focused on locating and removing the fetid garbage that callous visitors had left behind in the bush, along the pathways, in the fringes of the forest, among the roots of the mangrove trees and along the long, narrow water paths: cigarette packets, liquor bottles, leftover food, polythene bags, cola bottles, matchboxes, rotten fruits, an assortment of decaying garbage. (97)

She collects the garbage in her boat and dumps it in a small uninhabited island overrun by the forest. This manoeuvre can be taken as a reflection of an unfulfilled wish inherent in Noor Muhammad, that is to bring Aathi back to its normal state. This is again a representation of his Wille zum Leben. Aathi is not the old serene place anymore. From the relationship that Noor Muhammad establishes with the girl which is a mechanism his mind adopts to manifest his will to live, it is quite evident that Noor Muhammed is in need of a partner in life who can take care of Aathi. Because like Shailaja, Noor Muhammad's Will is also to live in a neat place like old Aathi.

But Kumaran is portrayed as a cosmopolitan man. For him woman or land, both are sources to be used and exploited to satisfy his Wille zum Leben. The act of grabbing the little chain, the

symbol of his mother's married life can be taken as a representation of evil in the manifestation of Kumaran's will to live. How he exploits Kunjimathu before leaving Aathi is also a mechanism he follows according to the orientation of his iniquitous nature of the will to live. Not different is his relationship with Aathi or any other place he inhabits. Almost all inhabitants of Aathi cherished it as a land that provides for them. Its air, water and soil were lifesaving and life giving to them. But Kumaran was indifferent. Like Sarah Joseph voices out:-

Water-life? Kumaran despised water. The thing had no form or shape. In a pot, it resembles a pot. Trapped in a pond, it takes on the shape of the pond. What is this water you're talking about? Does it have any identity? Will it ever be something in itself? Thought of it makes me sick.... All I should do, according to my father, is to stay here fondling the fingerlings. What else can you expect from old-fashioned people? I have to build my life. What have the fingerlings to do with it? (21-22)

Kumaran rules out the role of nature in building up one's life and entertains the strong conviction that he is the master of his destiny. This is Kumaran's representation of will to live as evident in the fiction. The nature and potential of Kumaran's will to live is made clear also from the remarks of Dinakaran: "Remember, Kumaran abandoned Aathi. Why do you think he did that? Well, let me tell you. Because his dreams were bigger than the mountains. Do you think he remembers any longer what this earth means to all of us. For him, Aathi no longer means rice, grain and fish. It means only money, money and money"(205).

What Komban Joy does in order to get five acres of paddy field from Kunjimathu, as per the direction of Kumaran also justifies the principle of Wille zum Leben. He was a person who lived by "glibness of his tongue rather than by the sweat of his brow" (172). What makes him a supporter of Kumaran is his necessity to get rid of debt and and lead a life of his dreams. His Will drives him to commit even heinous acts like mixing endosulfan to catch fish there by making the paddy fields infertile. Same are the interests of Ambu and Prakasan. Both follow Kumaran to further their self interests.

So it can be said that whether one loves or exploits Mother Earth, it all depends on the drives of one's Wille zum Leben. No human being has any particular affection or affinity towards nature. The drives of Wille zum Leben are what takes a man through the journey of life. Since the actions also stem from the innerste of one's will, it will surely reflect in his relationship with his surroundings and fellow beings.

Literature often showcases social concerns so as to sensitize the readers to their immediate problems that necessitate fast redressal. Sara Joseph's novel GG puts forward many ecological concerns through its treatment of plot, theme and characters because of which the novel was materialized to study to such and such aspects only. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer argues that a human being's actions are determined by one factor who is living inside him which is his Wille zum Leben. The whole world surrounding a human being exists only as vorstellung or representation, completely dependent on this cognizing subject.

The present study establishes that since the actions of all characters arise from their Wille zum Leben, the remedy to the ecological problems mentioned in the novel, if it is intended by the author or not, is possible only by finding out ways to control their Wille zum Leben in favour of nature or any other subject matter.

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