



MY WORKSHOP

Translation of
Edasseri's essay
Ente Panippura

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Edasseri

Mind has to traverse through a number of phases before any literary work takes shape. It is not possible to meticulously analyze the few initial phases of this process. During this phase my mind does not follow a rational path, but wanders through seemingly inscrutable and endless reverie. Something triggers a cause that makes mind tenderly emotional. The cause could be the elation from reading another book, an extraordinary personal experience or a memory that was awakened by a sound, a visual or a fragrance. There are many causal events that can transport one's mind into a state of introversion; any one of these is capable of acting as a trigger.

Mind has turned emotive and introvert; will that state then develop into a poem? If so, how nice it would have been! For, by now I would have produced my anthology of poems the size of ten "Mahabharatha". But, a will has to operate at such times; an irresistible urge for writing a poem; for creation. Only then, the mind will emerge in an awakened state from the abyss of the unknown, bringing along the required 'ore' for creation of a poem!

By the time such a stage for creation reaches, the mind must have traversed through many phases which do not have any definite contours or dividers. These phases can better be described as solitary dreams, rather than an intensive thought process of mind. Neither can it be portrayed, nor be termed as a purely conscious effort. I underline the word 'purely' because this does not happen in a situation void of thought and discretion. This is a phase full of irritations and anxieties turning one's mood rather nasty. It is a period that requires solitude more than ever. This period could be superficially construed even as non-productive due to its sheer inactivity. The significance of that period is that it happens in a time frame when the mind experiences undefined uneasiness lasting for days together and on looking back at a later date; long to have a repeat of that. I would like to call it as a sweet pain or an appealing agony. However, I have to mention that all these happen outside my work shop.

With the handful of 'ore' that my mind has dug up from the abyss of unknown, I enter my work shop! Whatever be the turmoil, I am sure to mould something out of it. If I am to engage myself in a hundred issues outside - it happens - I will allot only that much attention as needed. My mind would always stay close to the melting malleable metal, like a mother would remain with her offspring notwithstanding the thousands of her household chores; all along trying to mould a shape out of it.

A brief explanation is needed here. Is it mere 'ore' that I have got with me? This metaphor actually falls short in front of the subjective evidence. While the "ore" I come up with is rather fluid and blurred and could be a mere subject, it could also be something amenable to my mind's rhythm and eager to be formed as a poem, often with two or three verses already formed, similar to the new leaves on a first sprout. May be what I got was an abstract image of a character, which would develop more clearly and defined at the climax of a theme with lots of dramatic conflicts. In any case, it is the vision which is good enough to form a faint sense at least, with a 'beginning, middle and an end' of something that could be called as my creation later. There is, therefore, no meaning in calling it just an 'ore'. Honestly, I myself am not able to name it being a phenomenon which is not clear in my imagination and which could involuntarily undergo transformations.

I am trying to recollect the making of the narrative poem "The New Harvest Clay Pot and the Sickle" in my Workshop. There were two questions imprinted in my mind. Who sowed? Who reaped? The story of the poem does not have any significance other than being a plot that is able to powerfully connect these two questions. After spending a few days with the mind restless for unknown reasons and the same questions surging up high and rhyming repeatedly in my mind, the full poem was revealed with a beginning, middle and an end, as explained earlier.



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"Who in the last season had sown
The Aryan seeds in this field with love?"

After writing the above, it was not those lines as seen printed now in the book that were in my mind. They were the following lines, now seen in some other location.

"Who was it that reaped this year
The golden grain that Koman grew?"

Koman the farmer, the paddy field, his family, all were there in between these two separated verses.

Let me recollect yet another poem of mine. This poem is included in the anthology of poems called "Alakavali".

Covert glances of mine alone,
To paint saffron, on blossom cheeks!
Breeze that bears your heart's fragrance,
No one else be able to inhale.
No other eager ears get; a drop of this
Nectar of words, this flower rains.
One more thing, those kohl lined eyes,
Should ever be there, slyly on mine;
Either for scribbling letters of love
Or for making looks more intense!

It was only after writing these lines that I got complete picture of that poem. Then I wrote the first stanza starting with "Let us go, let us go my darling, beyond the boundaries of the inquisitive world."

Have I ever written and published any poem just as it had sprouted in my mind? I don't remember. Chances are that I have not. I write continuously as if in a brain storming session, without proper form, structure or style and many portions raw since sufficient attention not paid to finer details. Since many of my poems are narratives, I focus initially on the characters and scenes only that are required to tell the story. The poems which are written continuously and therefore in a raw state will be subjected to critical examination before presenting to the general public, with those lines which were written in a flow further subjected to many intellectual changes like altering the shape of a few, transferring the positions of some or giving salvation yet to some others!

How much of critical approach is advisable in the course of creativity process? My experience says - not much! I remember instances when I had to totally discard creations with regret because of excessive self criticism. That doesn't mean that there should not be any self checking. Like in many other instances, here also I follow a middle path.

It was a couple of my poet friends who prompted me to exercise some level of critical mind while writing poems. I remember them with gratitude. When we were young, we recite in our group the new poems written by us and used to mercilessly criticize them. Immediately after writing "Premopaharanga" (Gifts of Love) I recited that poem in our group. They made me change many lines in that poem. Out of these I cannot forget those two lines written to narrate the ineptness of the hero to find out whether the expressions of the heroine were actually gestures of love or not and finally assuaging himself that she was like this before also. I must have changed it ten times at least, each change only intensifying their scorn and I on my part getting more and more infuriated out of embarrassment. We spent around two to three hours on that portion and dispersed. Adopting the stance of a laureate poet I declared



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that those two lines are beyond correction. My friends passed the judgment that it would be embarrassingly bad if I leave it like that. After lunch when I was composed and returned to good mood, the apt lines came out involuntarily.

"Inscrutable was your face, earlier too
With the smile, those lovely lips
Never giving a hint
As to whether it begets a fruit or not."

Once again let me thank those terrible friends; they approved it!

When the theme of the poem is revealed in a rhymed manner, I like them naturally. Poems have a frame of mind that yearns for more fondness than any other category of literature. Unless there is a severe grammatical mistake or a slight inappropriateness, I prefer not to change any verses. I will argue that, for the ever growing language due to the constant interaction with other cultures, grammar has got only historical significance. But appropriateness is something that cannot be compromised.

I had searched my workshop several times, prior to writing this essay. Do the sensibility and form take birth simultaneously? The examples cited earlier do not give me a chance to think otherwise. Not only that; no instance is coming to my mind, where I was looking for the form while keeping the sensibility in mind or vice versa. Mind develops an abstract imagery. When that develops, the poem automatically gets evolved. This I can say from my experience, while acknowledging my ineptitude in poetics. I will also not proclaim that form evolves with a clear cut full blossomed imagery, like the sensibility.

In the absence of admirers or friends, my Workshop now resembles a village black smith's workplace. With absolute dedication and concentration, I mould a penknife. With the slipping spectacles put back in position, I look at the penknife several times as if inspecting, but actually enjoying the beauty of it. There is a general saying that "even the best trained will not have sufficient confidence", so looking inside the house I call "Hey, please come here". My wife appears wiping out her hand in her clothes, as if one who have undergone training on English cutleries. She will inspect my beautiful knife, examine it in and out and will return with an air of satisfaction and mostly with the comment, "What is there to doubt? Is this not how a clever looks like?"

Stooping, and without uttering a word I will wipe it a couple of more times and give it to those who want it.

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