

Vol 5 Issue 12 Sep 2016

ISSN No : 2249-894X

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*Monthly Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal*

*Review Of  
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## NATURALISM AND DOMINANCE OF SEA IN RIDERS TO THE SEA

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### ABSTRACT

*In the play, Riders to the Sea, sea plays a vital role in the life of the people of Aran islanders. Their life and story are set up against the background of the Sea. It is unseen presence fills the mind of both the characters. The Aran islanders lived in a terrible atmosphere for them the sea was the giver and the taker of life the islanders had to ride to the sea for their livelihood, they had to pay a tremendous price for their survival. The people had no alternative but to live in an island which is isolated. The sea is not merely a background for the human drama but an active participant. The sea becomes the dramatic personae in Synge's play.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Naturalism and Dominance of Sea , human drama .*

### INTRODUCTION

The title, Riders to the Sea is actually taken from the



Bible, is an extended metaphor meaning 'we are all moving toward mortal death literally true of the people of the Aran islands, where this play takes place, who depend on the sea not only for a livelihood, but also as the only connection to the "world". As each of Maurya's sons reaches maturity, the economics of the culture draws them to the dangerous sea life. The knotted sweater bundle is the evidence of the recent loss of the son, and seeing the second son riding a horse along a steep cliff is another physical manifestation of the sea's toll on those it calls to ride to it. The title is therefore significant and has a double meaning. The sea can be both the survivor and destructive force. It is the provider because her sons can make a living but it is also the force which takes their lives. It has the capacity to change their lives for the better or the worse. Unfortunately, this family will be unable to transform themselves or their lives from being the victims to the victors, the significance of the title and its irony resonates with the reader who understands and sympathizes with the desperate situation.

Riders to the Sea refers us not only to the world of History and folk-lore, but also to the world of archetypal symbolism. The emphasis is on the dominance of the Sea and its power as the giver and taker of life. Sea is the giver of life in the sense that deprived of timber and turf from the stony soil, during winter months, the Irish peasants starved, if because of the endless storms, they did not go out fishing. The sea was the taker of life too

for in the words Of Maurya: There does to be a power of young men floating round the sea, it is the killer of the young men floating around the sea'. It is the killer of the young and bread winners. Synge himself has observed in his "Aran Islands" 'I could not help feeling that I was talking with men who were under the judgement of Death'. Since the sea would take them anyway they do not learn how to swim, for that would only prolong their suffering in this world. Here was acceptance of the Tragic in life." In Synge's "Riders to the Sea" the sea seems the main protagonist. Reference to the power of the Almighty God of the Catholic faith, are often Juxtaposed;

Nora: Says he..... and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute..... with no son living.

Cathleen: Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

Nora: Middling bad, God help us. There's is a great roaring in the west.....

The sea is not simply a god. He is the Pre-Existent Evil and Good.

One cannot but recall here the sea-god Posiedon; for the death of Bartley and the death of Hippolytus in the Greek legend are similar, Both Bartley and Hippolytus leave homes after disagreement with their mothers, without their blessings. Cathleen takes her mother Maurya, to task for sending Bartley out with 'an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear'. It is the false accusation of incest by Phaedra against her step son, Hippolytus that eventually led Poseidon cause the horse of Hippolytus get started and throw him to his death. It is the 'hard word of Maurya –i.e. her unwillingness to give the return blessing to her son Bartley and her inability to respond to his second greeting. God's Blessing on you that made the grey pony on which the phantom of Michael was riding, cause the fall of Bartley in to the sea and kill him. That these parallels were deliberate and not accidental is seen in Synge's writing to 'The Speaker' in 1904 of the Greek Kinship of Irish Legends'.

The sea plays an important role in Riders to the Sea. It is an invisible force which shapes the destinies of all the characters. The readers or the spectators are throughout aware of its moods and its power. It does not appear on the stage but we feel that it is the main actor. It forms the setting of the play and is also an offstage protagonist. The sea is cruel and merciless and ruthless in dealing with human beings. Prayers to God are of no avail in saving man from the sea. Maurya says that the young priest knows nothing about the sea. The men know the varying moods of the sea well and are not afraid of it. Even the young girls like Nora look at the sea and judge whether it is going to be smooth or rough.

The Riders to Sea and on the Sea are the young man. They have the same fierceness and determination as the sea. When Bartley has made up his mind to go to the young men, and they take up challenge and are ready to go to the sea at all times without caring for the risks involved. The people of Aran Islands believe that a person is born on the flood tide dies on the ebb. The islanders do not learn swimming because if there is storm and a person falls on the waves it is better that he should be drowned quickly. If he tries to swim his suffering would only be prolonged. There is ritual drowning, if a person has fallen in water and is about to be drowned nobody would save him because the belief is that you must not take back what the Sea has claimed. If a person's cap blows off and falls on the Sea, he must not look at it.

The sea is both provider and destroyer; provides life, connection with the mainland, but it takes life. Its power is the main theme of the play illustrated for the audience by the tearing open of the door at the beginning and by the descriptions given by the girls. Their sense of time, of direction is determined the sea. The fishermen struggle to get a living out of the sea in tiny, frail boats made of tarred canvas, which they make themselves. The dramatic structure of the play centres on the sea in the beginning there is suspense as to whether the last remaining son will survive the storm. The main epic

speech describes the destruction of the men of the family. As the old woman tells of past tragedies, the next and last one is re enacted. This shows the audience that their presentments and fears were justified it shows the struggle with the elements and the cycle of death most dramatically, it presents the ancient ritual of the community in the face of death it shows the stoic resignation and dignity of the old woman. The life of the people is presented as being archaic in many respects. It is true that the characters are shown to be Catholics, but the beliefs of ancient times are seen to be very much alive, black hags and spirits haunts the seas Maurya see the ghost of her dead son, and all interpret this as a sign that the son is doomed. The dead man takes the last remaining son with him. The priest is almost pitied by Maurya as a young man who doesn't really know what he is talking about and who can offer neither sound advice nor comfort, though he tries his best. There is a great sense of the world of the spiritual, catholic and older elements intermingling without conflict.

Thus the sea is the inscrutable and powerful force which causes endless tragedy. Synge brings the sea in place of fate and at the time he juxtaposes the sea with fate. The sea becomes the Nemesis against whom the doomed mankind must fight and through this fight man attains dignity. Maurya rises in dignity as she learns to accept the sea as the agent of destiny through which maurya learns the wisdom and the truth. The tidings of the sea turn the tidings of Maurya and her two daughters. She suffers she experiences and she learns from the sea.

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