

V. INDIRA BHAVANI'S AVATARS: A CRITIQUE OF MALE WORLD

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Abstract: Indira Bhavani's 'Avatars' discusses ten incarnations of male perceived and understood by the poet in the present context. It presents dichotomy of ten avatars of classical mythology that manifest ten aspects of God on ten different occasions as the saviour and ultimate benefactor whereas in modern man these incarnations manifest in the form of social and natural vice. What is striking about the poem is these incarnations are reflected in ten distinct form. These come up and are realized on different occasions but they occur simultaneously also at a time. It has now become easier for a man to have these vices and manifest them with simultaneity. The poet sees different traits of a man in the form of ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu but incarnation in contemporary modernist society is without any codes of moral and ethical behaviour. Its purports and objectives are: mythological and realistic; the classical and modern; celestial and human; heavenly and earthly and God and man. The poet is talking about the second aspect: Realistic, modernity, earthly and human. When first things transform into second a lot happen. It changes into spiritual to mundane, good to evil, heavenly to earthly etc. The poem engages only male world, be it the incarnations of Vishnu or modern man. It revolves around men centric world where there is no space for women. In the poem, poet has used sarcastic tone to critique men and their multiple forms of evil nature in contemporary context.

Keywords: V. Indira Bhavani, Avatars, Mythical Allusions, Modern Man.

Introduction: Indira Bhavani, a Tamil poet, was born in Aruppukkottai, Tamilnadu, in 1942. She has three collections of poetry and a volume of short stories to her credit. She writes in Tamil. She also uses her pen -name(s) *Ivara/IndhuVardhan* for her writings. She belongs to a generation of women writers such as Savitri Rajeevan (*Malyalam*), M.R.Kamala, S Usha (*Kannada*), Kondepudi Nirmala (*Telgu*), Kabita Sinha and Mallika Sengupta (*Bangali*) Gagan Gill and Katyayani (*Hindi*) Aruna Dhire (*Marathi*) etc, together they seek a new politics of desire that can restructure the male-dominated world on the basis of love, freedom and equality. In the poem, Indira Bhavani speaks sarcastically of the ten 'Vishnu' avatars by reducing divine avatars to 'profane' personality traits of man in society. In ancient and post-classical Hindu mythology, the ten avatars of Vishnu have a great reverence. He has been metamorphized ten times for the divine and good cause of humanity. These ten avatars of Vishnu, depicted in Hindu mythology, correspond the idea as how he, with each avatar, battles out evil and liberates humanity from insidious clutches of demons. These incarnations were meant to spread goodness among human being.

individual. The individual discussed in it is a man and the effects that he can make on society has been brought out by the poet in a very compact way.

In the second avatar, the man has been described with an objective correlative of Tortoise. He, upon being called for some good cause hides himself in his shell. He does not come out to contribute some good actions in society. He is a sloth who is driven to have voluptuous life in his shell. His irresponsible behaviour has been denounced scathingly. 'Good and strong deeds' that require man to act while being an essential part of society is the expectation that he should fulfil. He behaves otherwise. He is apathetic and does not concern himself with the things happening around him. He keeps himself in a shell and takes delight in it. Such a behaviour of man makes him a Tortoise who remains in its shell only. He thinks his world limits within it. Next, man has been explained of being an avatar of a pig. A pig symbolically represents man's gluttony nature. He pours down himself 'in an ocean of booze' and impatiently surrounds himself with a 'singular sort of world'. His numb senses make him unable to have sentiments and rationality. He is highly intoxicated. He lets slide all his responsibilities toward family and society. He has become a self-centred man who acts irresponsibly. He is also likened to be 'Narasimha the man-lion'. This man lion is a bully who bosses around and dictates his employees. He, in the office, *makes his workers dance* and forces them to work inhumanly. He displays sadistic traits who beams with happiness by inflicting pain upon his workers. So much so that, he grabs *files, the men and their work* and changes all of it to ragged and torn condition.

A dwarf is the next avatar that a man has. He lacks courage, so concocts false designs for his personal benefit. His wishes for *underhand bribes...spore by spore* which results in *a heart full of cobwebs*. He is that man who cannot care for anything and can cross over any limit to mould the condition to his personal use. Such a man in society lets criminal activities grow relentlessly without having any harness over it. When he uses his *hoe weapon to weed out people* whom he does not like, he is *Rama-with-the axe*. He harbours rancid thoughts about others in his crooked heart. He uses his weapon to harm and hurt people who are enemy to him. He is opportunist and selfish man. He does not care for others and always cash in any opportunity to his greed. He is of malicious nature. He spites others and stab them. His heart is crooked which suggest him being venomous and slime. He is a man of ill and sick thoughts.

The next incarnation talks about the pretentious nature of man which juxtaposes the image of Lord Rama. The man makes promises of loyalty and monogamy in loud ways but those are all just loud words and hallow promises without any substance in his words. He promises not to touch anyone else in his life and heart but all his vows are only sham. Further, he hides behind dark glasses, glares and ogles women everywhere wherever he has the opportunity; *Enjoying women fore and aft on buses and off and takes special pleasure*'. He cheats women by keeping two separate houses far apart and by doing that he thinks of himself as Lord Krishna. He is treacherous and full of deceptions. He thinks himself shrewd enough to do it and get away scot free.

The poet concludes with the words 'And so on and so forth' which implies that man keeps on changing multiple avatars. If we closely read his behaviour we come across thousands of avatars embedded in his personality. More importantly, he himself is an avatar having labyrinth of multiple complexity and many a time these become incomprehensible avatars. Subsequently, man has

distorted and maligned the pious avatars of Hindu mythology. Poet has depicted a man of modern time. This man is not an inch close to the good avatars of Hindu scriptures. It also engages issues that in a society like this which is male dominated how women will survive. This inequality, emancipation of women, freedom is seemed a far -fetched idea.

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