

A comparative study on García Lorca's drama Yerma and Gunasēna Galappaththi's Sri Lankan drama Mūdu Puththu

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ABSTRACT

The Sri Lankan drama Mūdu Puththu, which is a Sinhala language adaptation, was inspired by Yerma, a drama written by García Lorca. The purpose of this research is to identify the similarities and differences between both plays namely, Yerma and Mūdu Puththu in terms of themes, character portrayals, and artistic usage. The research methodology used in this study is the qualitative research method. The primary sources selected for this study were the script of Yerma written by García Lorca, the Sinhala drama Mūdu Puththu written by Gunasēna Galappaththi and Mahagama Sēkara. Both Yerma and Mūdu Puththu showed similarity mainly in the central theme on which they were based on. According to the main theme, the common factor to both plays was the tragic story of a woman who desires deeply to have a child. However, the background settings of the two plays were different. Yerma was set against an agricultural rural lifestyle, while Mūdu Puththu was set within a fishing community. In Yerma, the reason the heroine cannot have a child was not due to any physical weakness of her husband. Lorca portrays the heroine as a woman tormented by her intense desire for barren. In Mūdu Puththu, however, the character Sārā cannot have a child because of her husbands' physical weakness. The name Sārā itself carries a symbolic meaning related to sex. Yerma did not simply wish to become a mother by any means; rather, she wanted to bear a child through her husband and within marriage. But Sārā's desire was primarily to become a mother by any means that possible. Yerma sought blessings and supernatural help from mystical forces and rituals in order to have a child. Sārā, on the other hand, sought blessings from god of Kataragama in the hope of conceiving. Yerma's husband Juan is more concerned with sexual satisfaction rather than having a child. As a result, Yerma eventually strangled him to death. In Mūdu Puththu, Sārā couldn't conceive a child from her husband Thēgiris, so she bears a child by Diyonis, who is Thēgiris's brother. As a consequence, her husband later killed the child by strangulating. In Yerma, Lorca mainly used dialogue-driven dramatic narration, while in Mūdu Puththu, Galappaththi employed a mixed language style combining prose and poetry. Thus, in both plays the dramatists successfully shape their themes in accordance with their own social, economic, and political environments..

Keywords: drama, , Galappaththi, Lorca, Mūdu Puththu, Yerma

1. INTRODUCTION

Research Objectives

- Objective 1: To identify the thematic similarities between the plays Yerma and Mūdu Puththu.
- Objective 2: To examine the similarities and differences in characterization across both plays.
- Objective 3: To analyze the convergence and divergence in artistic techniques and staging conventions between Yerma and Mūdu Puththu.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology. The primary sources selected for analysis are the original play script of Federico García Lorca's Yerma and the

Sinhala theatrical script Mūdu Puththu, co-authored by Gunasēna Galappaththi and Mahagama Sēkera. Through a close textual reading of both scripts, this study comparative-analytically investigates the thematic structures, socio-cultural contexts, character profiles, linguistic styles, and artistic techniques embedded in the two works.

Significance of the Study

The scholarly significance of this comparative study of García Lorca's Yerma and Gunasēna Galappaththi's Mūdu Puththu lies in its contribution of new analytical perspectives to the field of theatre criticism. Furthermore, by evaluating Mūdu Puththu as an adaptation, this research offers practitioners and scholars a framework for

identifying structural alignments and divergences between source texts and their localized theatrical reimaginings.

Data Analysis

Federico García Lorca stands among the most distinguished dramatists to emerge in the early twentieth century. Deeply nourished by the cultural heritage into which he was born, Lorca's distinctive genius lies in his ability to portray, in a profoundly poetic and emotionally stirring manner, the complex dilemmas encountered by the human spirit within that very milieu (Abeypāla, 1999:80).

According to Lorca, any nation that fails to appreciate or support its dramatic art is either a dead nation or one in the throes of decay. Likewise, a form of theatre that does not engage with the existential struggles of the people cannot be regarded as true drama; it is merely a vehicle of superficial entertainment. A stage that presents such art is not a theatre in the genuine sense, but rather a space where trivialities are displayed to idly consume time (Obēsēkara, 1990:i).

After residing for a period in New York, Lorca returned to Spain in the autumn of 1930, only to find the country engulfed in political turmoil. It was during this turbulent period that his three greatest tragic dramas were conceived. By 1934, the political climate in Spain had once again become increasingly volatile. Between 1934 and 1935, systematic attacks against socialist groups intensified, with many individuals being secretly executed. In July 1936, Francisco Franco seized power. Just two days prior to this event, Lorca, who had travelled from Madrid to Granada, went into hiding at a friend's residence, where he subsequently disappeared. To this day, neither his body nor his grave has been discovered.

It is reported that the opening performance of *Yerma* was marked by political unrest. A disturbance erupted at the beginning of the play due to opposition directed at its leading actress, Margarita Xirgu. However, as the performance progressed, the audience gradually settled. By the end of the first act, the theatre resounded with an unprecedented ovation unlike any Lorca had previously received. It is said that all of Spain's eminent literary figures, including Unamuno, were present at the theatre on that occasion (Obēsēkara, 1990:ii).

The unfortunate *Yerma* craves for self realization in the form of maternity, but her barrenness becomes a source of unending torture for her in a traditional society that denies women social equality. After five long years of fighting a losing battle against a relentless fate, *Yerma* finds out that honest means do not give her the fulfillment of her dreams and it would be utterly unacceptable for her to go beyond the boundaries of her own sense of honor. In a way, the story of *Yerma* reflects the agony of the present day women, who, like *Yerma* undergo the same torment of repressed desires and are, either driven to insanity or condemned forever (Sadaf, 2015). Lorca was a critic of the status of women in the Spanish society of his time. In his plays, he presents women as tragic characters. *Yerma* is a tragedy set in rural Spain. The present study is an analysis of the presentation of gender roles in *Yerma*. In the play, an inversion of patriarchal gender roles. The

female protagonist is shown to be dominant, and she becomes a spokesperson for the needs, desires, and sentiments of women. In *Yerma*, Lorca offers a subversion of the traditional gender roles (Imitiaz & Khan, 2021). Johann Jakob Bachofen's anthropological study *Das Mutterrecht* (1861) describes the evolution of human kind as a gendered struggle between mother and father law. In addition to portraying this struggle, *Yerma* also alludes to the classical conflict between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which makes the play end with the death and devastation of a traditional tragedy (Lindholm, 2020). *Yerma*, as a prototype of minority figures, is subjected to those strategies of 'otherization' which she cannot help tolerating due to an internalization of the family and social discourses of norms and stereotypes, which is still true to the lives of many women even these days. *Yerma* finds no way out of such stagnant life scripts but through a sudden outrageous rebellion against the system (and its representative Juan). Such rebellion questions the dominant paranoid control exerted by every hierarchical system in society. These challenges pursue a type of "deterritorialization" of such systems and their meta-narratives by opening new horizons which introduce new types of relationships and orders which are far different from the mainstream culture and, thus, challenging, unsettling, and dangerous. In fact, they are new voices which can be heard (Taheri, 2022).

Yerma is, fundamentally, a tragedy that explores the individual self oppressed by the rigid constraints of society. *Yerma*, whose very name signifies barrenness, is married to a man named Juan. She harbours an intense longing to bear a child, yet her desire remains unfulfilled. Juan, her husband, is indifferent if not averse to having children. *Yerma* eventually learns that sterility pervades his lineage. Disillusioned with her husband, she becomes emotionally attached to a shepherd named Víctor. Nevertheless, bound by deeply ingrained traditions and beliefs, *Yerma* recoils from the possibility of bearing a child through her lover. According to prevailing cultural norms, she must conceive only through her lawful husband. Meanwhile, Juan comes to realize that his wife does not truly love him, and he becomes deeply anxious that rumours concerning this estrangement might spread within society.

As a final resort, *Yerma* seeks divine intervention at a sacred site located in the mountains, a place widely renowned among barren women. Suspicious of *Yerma*'s conduct, Juan follows her. Overcome with anger, he turns increasingly violent and insists that a childless life is, in fact, a profoundly contented one. In destroying the very purpose for which *Yerma* lives, he effectively enacts the moral annihilation of her existence. *Yerma* may thus be understood as a symbolic representation of the Spanish spirit, one constrained and suffocated by rigid traditional customs. In composing *Yerma*, Lorca adopts an intermediate stylistic mode, situated between the poetic lyricism of his earlier works and the heightened realism evident in his later dramatic productions. In the writing of *Yerma*, an intermediate style was adopted between the poetic style of Lorca's initial work, *Blood Wedding*, and the realistic style of his final work, *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Abeypāla, 1999:80).

Two further aspects of Lorca's dramatic art merit particular attention. First is his masterful incorporation of poetry and song into the structure of his plays. Second is his deliberate attempt to elevate art especially theatre beyond mere naturalism, transforming it into a realm imbued with a certain metaphysical intensity. Much like in some Japanese short stories, a pervasive sense of death lingers within Lorca's works, haunting their thematic fabric (Abeypāla, 1999:80).

Although Lorca was a Spanish playwright, the thematic concerns of his works are not confined to Spain alone. Rather, they articulate a universal human experience, one that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. Indeed, such existential conditions may arise in any part of the world, even in the present day.

Ideally, all foreign literary works should be translated into Sinhala. However, translation must arise from a sense of attachment, respect, and genuine affection toward the original text. Moreover, in translating a dramatic work, particular attention must be paid to the emotional resonance generated by its central theme. Unlike other literary forms, the success of a play depends largely on its capacity to elicit an immediate and powerful response from its audience (Obēsēkara, 1990:iv).

We live in an era marked by rapid social transformation, a condition that is especially pronounced in Sri Lanka. Traditional caste practices and social norms are not only changing swiftly but are also losing much of their former value. In such a context, society cannot be guided merely through moral instruction. People today subject not only customs but even certain religious beliefs to critical scrutiny. Attempts to instill fear of hell or desire for heaven serve only to deepen hypocrisy. Genuine moral integrity can be cultivated only by fostering a true understanding of life and society. When such understanding is achieved, individuals act not out of fear of punishment or hope of reward, but from a sincere recognition of what is good as good, and bad as bad. In this regard, dramas that explore the profound complexities of human existence offer immense support.

The period between the 1960s and 1970s is often regarded as the golden age of Sri Lankan theatre. This era was marked by the production of high-quality plays, the emergence of skilled dramatists, and the development of a robust critical tradition. Among the notable works of this period is *Mūdu Puththu* (1962), produced by Gunasena Galappaththi. This play is based on *Yerma* by the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. According to records, *Mūdu Puththu* provoked considerable controversy among both critics and audiences, to the extent that some scheduled performances had to be cancelled.

In interpreting *Mūdu Puththu*, it becomes necessary to examine *Yerma* itself. Although the two plays differ in their settings, their thematic core remains closely related. *Yerma* is set against an agrarian background, whereas *Mūdu Puththu* draws upon the life of fishing communities. Given that Sri Lanka is an island nation surrounded by the sea, the choice of a coastal setting proves particularly appropriate. This transformation enables the play to resonate more effectively with the local cultural environment. Furthermore, by likening life to a vast, shoreless ocean, the dramatist successfully incorporates a

symbolic element familiar within Sri Lankan Buddhist thought.

Federico García Lorca is one of the most important authors of Spanish Literature who best describe the woman trapped between the life dictated by traditions and human instincts in Spanish society of the 20th century. Growing up in the lands graced with Andalusian cultures, Lorca observes the most natural state of man and its place in the rules of society and carries the theme of "woman". In Lorca's works, women -as an individual in a traditional society- remain between the desires of their instincts and human nature, and the patriarchy of the Andalusian lands. The young woman *Yerma* in Lorca's work named "*Yerma*" -as an individual- remains in this dilemma. Young woman is married to Juan for four years, and their marriage needs a fresh life; a child is missing. Juan, who devotes himself to the business and his field, is indifferent to *Yerma* and the idea of having a child. There is no sexual attraction between them, marriage has been done in a traditional way, not through sexual attraction and love, but with the right of families. As to *Yerma*, it is necessary to be a mother culturally under the traditional understanding dictated by the society, and it also needs sexual saturation with the gap that the husband cannot see. It's a lonely woman. The society alienates her as a childless woman, and her husband, Juan, turns back, not providing her a warm home. Thus, the young woman is pushed to loneliness both socially and familial. With all these gaps, the young woman becomes a desolated individual in society. In this work, *Yerma* -as a feminine individual- is studied as a lonely woman against the Spanish society (Liker, 2017).

Yerma is observed to be a heroine of "sterility" or rather, the heroine of an impossibility to love. The heroics of this impossibility is interpreted according to the social constraints made upon women within a male dominated society. These constraints are said to surface symptomatically within her own dream world as a heroine who is allowed to experience love only in the form of an illegitimate desire to procreate (Fusco & Tomassoni, 2001).

In Lorca's play, *Yerma* is a wife tormented by an intense longing for motherhood. Her inability to conceive is not attributed to any physical deficiency on her part. Significantly, Lorca names his heroine "*Yerma*," a term meaning "barren," thereby presenting her not merely as a character shaped by psychological causation, but as a powerful symbol. This symbol gestures toward the tragic paradox inherent in human existence and the laws that govern it. *Yerma*'s sorrow over her childlessness, along with her overwhelming desire for a child, assumes the form of a poetic obsession that permeates her consciousness. Her husband Juan neither desires nor tolerates the idea of children. In her desperation, *Yerma* turns to supernatural means seeking assistance from spirits in graveyards and consulting elderly women for guidance. Despite her deep love for her husband, her longing for a child remains unfulfilled. Eventually, she participates in a ritual ceremony dedicated to women seeking fertility. During this ritual, an old woman suggests that *Yerma* might conceive if she were to live as the wife of her son. *Yerma* rejects this proposal with indignation

and moral resolve.

After the ceremony, she proceeds toward her cart, where she encounters her husband waiting behind it. The ensuing dialogue between them resembles a storm that shatters the barriers concealing their inner emotions. Even at this critical moment, Juan desires nothing more than physical gratification from his wife. He forcefully embraces and kisses Yerma, revealing the profound emotional and existential divide between them.

"In the moonlight, you are truly beautiful. Kiss me like this," he says.

"I will never do that again," (Lorca, 1997:79) she replies. Then, like one possessed, she cries out in a choked voice and seizes her husband by the throat. She strangles him to death.

In Lorca's drama, these are the final words uttered by Juan the central male figure just moments before he is killed by his enraged wife:

"What matters to me is only what I can grasp in my hands and see with my eyes" (Lorca, 1997:80).

Through these words, Lorca does not portray Juan as a man of wisdom, but rather as one driven by crude sensuality and rustic materialism.

Gunasēna Galappaththi's *Mūdu Puththu* is based on *Yerma*, the play written by the Spanish poet and dramatist Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). In *Yerma*, the protagonist remains childless even after two years of marriage. Though she listens to the advice and counsel of elderly neighbouring women and even seeks the aid of unseen forces, none of these efforts fulfills her longing. Her husband, Juan, not only shows no interest in her deeply natural desire for motherhood but also begins to suspect her. The thought that she might attempt to obtain a child from another man gives rise to jealousy and resentment within him. By restricting his wife's freedom and assigning his sisters to monitor her behaviour, Juan generates within *Yerma* an intense, restless agitation. She grows increasingly defiant. Yet, she lacks the strength to transgress the deeply entrenched social norms and moral codes that govern her life. She believes that she must bear a child only through her lawful husband.

Thus, she cries out:

"I do not love him. But he is my only saviour through blood and through honour, he alone is my salvation" (Lorca, 1997:46).

Juan, as depicted in Lorca's play, is a profoundly self-centred individual. What he desires from his wife is merely sexual gratification. For this very reason, he wishes to prevent her from becoming a mother. Her hopes, desires, and sufferings remain entirely beyond his comprehension. Even her attempts to speak of them irritate him. What Juan truly seeks is only Yerma's body. His denial of her motherhood is not accidental, but deliberate a fact he openly admits just before his death.

Juan: Many women would envy the life you live. A childless life is far more pleasurable... The life I live without children is a fortunate one. It is not your fault.

Yerma: Then what did you expect from me?

Juan: Nothing else only you (Lorca, 1997:54).

Although Juan makes such declarations, Yerma never resorts to an illicit relationship. In this respect, Lorca's moral vision upholds a form of ethical restraint. However, Galappaththi extends beyond this framework.

Yerma's psychological tension, long suppressed, now reaches its breaking point. When she questions her husband once more, she receives a final and unequivocal answer—one that extinguishes all remaining hope:

Yerma: Then I must abandon all hope of having a child?

Juan: Yes.

Yerma: You too have no hope?

Juan: None. Accept it and live peacefully.

Yerma: Like a barren woman?

Juan: Yes. Let us live calmly and happily. Come, embrace me (Lorca, 1997:55).

After this response, nothing remains for her to say. Enraged like a serpent, she leaps forward and seizes his throat, strangling him until he dies. In that act, she releases the immense psychological pressure that has long accumulated within her. It becomes, paradoxically, a moment of inner relief.

She cries:

"Barren! Barren! It is certain! Now I know it without doubt... I can sleep without waking in terror at the thought that I might one day bear a child of my own blood... My whole body has dried up! I have killed my child my own child I have killed with my own hands!" (Lorca, 1997:82). Yerma's longing for a child is never fulfilled. Driven into a state of utter helplessness, she seeks psychological solace by destroying the very source from which her unborn child might have come her husband. She convinces herself that she can now live without hope. Since directing her desire toward another man would constitute a grave moral transgression, she perceives the only solution as the annihilation of her husband and the renunciation of all expectation. In contrast, the character of Sara in *Mūdu Puththu* follows a different trajectory. Her desire is fulfilled but not through her husband. Instead, it is through his younger brother, Dionis. Yet, can any of the three Sara, Dionis, or Tegiris be held morally responsible for this situation? Can it truly be said that the chain of events could have been avoided by any of them? In both *Yerma* and *Mūdu Puththu*, the tragic core lies in the crushing of a woman's inner life by rigid social constraints surrounding motherhood. Yerma remains childless, while Sara bears a child but is denied the possibility of living within socially accepted norms.

Like Yerma, *Mūdu Puththu* also encountered significant resistance during its initial staging. At its premiere, certain sections of the Sinhala theatre audience reacted with visible unrest. After the opening performance, some audience members walked out, remarking, "Obscenity has now been brought onto the Sinhala stage." Others expressed discomfort, saying, "Dear, I felt disgusted just watching it." *Mūdu Puththu* is a play that blends prose and verse, and some of its songs were criticized as being indecent. At one point, approximately eighty seats reserved for students from a private girls' school in Colombo were cancelled shortly before the performance. A principal in Gampaha even refused to provide a school hall for staging the play. Certain groups openly expressed anger, and there were indications that authorities were being urged to consider whether the play should be allowed to be performed at all. Although the number of opponents was relatively small, some among them possessed the influence to cause serious disruption. Their reactions even discouraged some of the actors involved.

Ultimately, these pressures led to the suspension of the play after only three performances. Nevertheless, the production received strong support from the majority of theatre-goers and from discerning critics. It was this support that made possible the second production of *Mūdu Puththu* (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:i).

There are two major differences between *Yerma* and *Mūdu Puththu*. One lies in the characterization of Juan and Tegiris. Juan fails to grasp the contradictions within his own life. He remains emotionally unaffected by *Yerma's* anguish over childlessness, and by the end of the play, the audience feels neither hatred nor sympathy toward him. Tegiris, however, is a far more complex character. He suffers internally over the betrayal of Sara and is deeply troubled by gossip and social condemnation. For him, Sara's longing for a child is not a simple matter. It is the surrounding society that ultimately drives Tegiris into becoming a frenzied killer. Consequently, by the end of the play, the audience feels not only compassion for Sara but also for Tegiris.

Another significant point of divergence between *Yerma* and *Mūdu Puththu* lies in the social environments within which the characters are constructed. While *Yerma* unfolds within an agrarian society, Galappaththi relocates the narrative framework into a coastal fishing community. By integrating the sea and the life of fishermen into the dramatic structure, he succeeds in endowing *Mūdu Puththu* with a sense of universality (Abēpāla, 1990:83,84).

The similarity between Lorca's *Yerma* and *Mūdu Puththu* exists primarily at the level of thematic substance. Both works are grounded in the tragic narrative of a woman tormented by her unfulfilled desire for motherhood. However, in developing this shared theme, the intention was not to produce a mere translation of Lorca's work, but rather to create an independent artistic production adapted to the Sri Lankan context. Whereas Lorca's play is set against an agricultural backdrop, *Mūdu Puththu* is situated in a village of coastal fishermen. In many Buddhist texts, life is metaphorically compared to an endless ocean; thus, selecting a fishing community as the setting brings the drama closer to Buddhist philosophical thought (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:v).

The protagonists of *Mūdu Puththu*, Sara and Thēgiris, are portrayed as characters distinct from their counterparts in *Yerma*. The play opens within Thēgiris's household, with fishing equipment displayed on stage, while Sara is seen seated on a bench, combing her hair. The name "Sārā" itself carries the connotation of sensuality or passion. Whether this meaning was intentionally assigned is uncertain. Martin Wickramasinghe offers the following interpretation of her character:

The name 'Sārā,' given to the heroine of *Mūdu Puththu*, may also denote sensuality. I do not believe this meaning was deliberately intended. Rather than symbolizing a woman yearning for motherhood, the author presents her as a character who, being dissatisfied with her husband, offers her body to another man. Under this theme, Galappaththi shattered the moral constraints he had constructed within his theatrical vision. He also, to a certain extent, transcended the ideology contained within *Yerma* (Gamage, 2016:267).

Sara's desire for a child does not arise from a tender, maternal longing to nurture and care for a child. Instead, it is driven by her wish to escape the slander of village women and the accusatory remarks of her mother-in-law. This is evident in the dialogue:

Silinā: "Is it only Hinnihāmi? All the women in this village... which woman is there who does not have a child? You people do not seem to care at all. Before I die, I too wish to behold the affection of a grandchild... but I have no such fortune. When one grows old, there must be a child to look after one's comforts and hardships."

Sārā: "But mother..."

Silinā: "I keep telling you to perform exorcistic rituals (to invoke unseen forces), but you do not even consider it."

Sārā: "Haven't I told him several times? He says that if such rituals are performed, the villagers will mock him."

Silinā: "Then make a vow at least. Who would know if you went to Kataragama (a sacred site associated with divine and unseen powers)?"

Sārā: "It would be better if you told him yourself, mother."

Silinā (angrily): "That is exactly what I am saying you two have no real intention. No one in our lineage has ever faced such a situation. Look... it has been seven years now..." (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:19).

Like *Yerma*, Sara too is guided by superstition. However, unlike *Yerma*, she ultimately attains motherhood not through her husband, but through an illicit relationship with his younger brother, Dionis. While *Yerma* rejects, with contempt, the idea of bearing a child through an extramarital relationship, *Mūdu Puththu* portrays Sara as regarding such an act however morally transgressive as almost heroic in her desperate pursuit of motherhood. Sara's overriding desire is to become a mother at any cost. Within the Sri Lankan cultural context, a married woman who remains childless is subjected to various forms of social stigma. Not only society at large, but also her husband, mother-in-law, and relatives direct blame and criticism toward her. This condition, much like caste-based discrimination, reflects a broader pattern observable across South Asian societies.

Galappaththi, in this drama, constructs his thematic framework by integrating deeply rooted beliefs and cultural concepts of rural Sri Lankan society. He artistically and convincingly reconfigures these elements to suit a local audience. The suffering endured by childless women, the reliance on unseen forces invoked as deities to overcome such suffering, and practices such as astrological matching in marriage all reveal the profound faith placed in metaphysical forces by rural communities. Although an adaptation, the play demonstrates remarkable creative skill in reimagining the narrative in alignment with Sri Lankan collective consciousness. Consequently, while many adaptations of the period failed, *Mūdu Puththu* emerged as a successful theatrical work (Weerasekara, 2019:25).

In the first act of *Mūdu Puththu*, although Sara has not borne a child, she expresses her views while being subjected to the sarcasm and ridicule of Hinnihāmi:

Sārā: "Stop talking nonsense, Hinnihāmi. If one lives carefully eats and drinks properly, and keeps a happy mind one will surely see the face of a child without any trouble, just like the moon rising from the sea. Don't listen

to all the things people say. Do you understand? Come here when you have nothing to do.”

Hinnihāmi: “Sārā akka speaks as if she were already the mother of ten children!” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:22).

When Sara meets her husband's younger brother Dionis for the first time, she says:

“No matter how much I tell you, you will not understand these things, younger brother. If you had been born a woman, you would understand the suffering I endure. Look at my body... look at my hips... do you see any deficiency? How many children could be born from these hips? Is there not enough blood in this body to nourish many children? They say that if a married woman does not bear children, the blood within her body turns poisonous” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:25).

Immediately following Sara's implicit physical solicitation, the chorus sings:

“To draw in the sweet scent of milk from an my son's lip,
To turn the tender breasts upward,
To cradle my son's in restful sleep within the womb,
Wide hips and a slender waist are given,
So that, in due time, milk may flow from the breast” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:30).

Sara, as portrayed in Galappaththi's drama centered on the lives of fisherfolk, is a profoundly realistic character. The play culminates tragically when the child born from Sara's illicit relationship with Dionis is killed by her husband. While the infant lies asleep, he suffocates it by pressing a pillow against its neck.

In contrast, Dionis is depicted as a markedly different and straightforward character. He is driven by a desire to fulfill whatever he claims as his own. Rather than fleeing from problems, he confronts them with courage. Upon understanding Sara's inner turmoil, he responds with compassion and develops affection toward her. He empathizes deeply with her suffering and consistently attempts to console her. For one possessed of a compassionate heart, it is impossible to turn away from a suffering human soul. It is for this reason that Dionis comes to love her. Observing Dionis's unusual behavior, Thēgiris begins to suspect him.

Thēgiris: “When you keep talking with my elder brother, it feels as though you lose your sense of awareness” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:27).

Thēgiris's response as a human being is shaped by the unexpected words that emerge from Sara herself:

Sara: “I have nothing to hide. That child is not yours. Now, when you look at it, who is truly barren you, or me?” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:30).

These words trigger a profound psychological upheaval within Thēgiris, pushing him to the brink of emotional collapse. As a man, he finds himself unable to endure even the social humiliation imposed upon him, largely due to his sense of personal dignity. The realization that his own brother born of the same blood and having lived alongside him has betrayed him intensifies his anguish. This emotional turmoil hardens his resolve to such an extent that he becomes capable of driving his own brother out of the house. This is clearly conveyed through his words:

Thēgiris: “You and I cannot live in this house together. That is all I have to say. If you leave, at least the slander

of the villagers will come to an end” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:28).

For a man like Thēgiris, who is consumed by anger to the point of near madness, the emergence of an impulse to kill the child is not altogether surprising. However, it is crucial to note that he does not commit the act with deliberate intention. Rather, the child's death occurs as a consequence of his uncontrollable rage. In such moments, human beings often arrive at extreme actions almost involuntarily. Through this portrayal, Gunasēna Galappaththi demonstrates a deep and precise understanding of the workings of the human mind, transforming his characters into vivid, lifelike representations of real human existence.

Within the framework of this drama, Sara is portrayed as a woman burdened with shattered aspirations. Even after seven years of marriage, she remains unable to bear a child. As a result, she becomes the target not only of social ridicule from neighbours but also of persistent reproach from her mother-in-law. She observes that many women who married after her are now enjoying the affection of their children, which further intensifies her longing. This growing desire gradually gives rise to deep psychological suffering, eventually reaching its peak. Her husband, Thēgiris, is not entirely unaware of his wife's mental distress. Yet he perceives himself as a victim of certain forces and circumstances beyond his control. It is precisely these forces that provoke his anger. He is aware that Sara was married to him through deception, involving the substitution of his younger brother's horoscope. On the one hand, he cannot bear to witness the growing closeness between Sara and Dionis; on the other hand, he recognizes that bringing Sara into his life through such deceit was not an act he consciously intended.

Sara comes to know of the confusion surrounding the horoscope through Iso. It is only thereafter that Sara and Dionis are compelled toward a course of action that becomes impossible to resist. In truth, Sara rightfully belongs with Dionis. At the same time, Dionis who understands the causes of Sara's inner suffering develops a deep sense of compassion toward her. Yet Dionis and Thēgiris are brothers, bound by the same blood.

After the birth of the child, Thēgiris declares:

“Younger brother, I do not wish for you to leave at all; yet you must surely understand by now that the situation has reached a point where you, I, and my wife cannot continue to live together under one roof” (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:29).

By the time he reaches the point of killing the child, Thēgiris acts like a man driven to madness.

The pain with which Thēgiris kills the infant is no less intense than the immeasurable maternal agony experienced by Sara upon seeing her dead child. In a deeper sense, Thēgiris does not consciously kill the child; rather, the child dies at his hands. Sara, Thēgiris, Dionis, and even the innocent infant are all like fish ensnared in a net powerless to break free and swim away. All of them are, in this sense, children of the sea (Mūdu Puththu).

As long as human beings remain enslaved to their desires, they are inevitably exposed to various forms of suffering in life. Is it, then, wrong to seek a realistic understanding of such conditions and to recognize their favourable and

unfavourable consequences? Could we not, ourselves, become victims of tragedies similar to those depicted in this drama? Does not the final outcome of these events strike us as a profound catastrophe upon witnessing the play? Does the drama merely arouse sensual emotions in the audience, or does it instead cultivate an awareness of the destructive consequences of such impulses?

Another significant factor contributing to the success of *Mūdu Puththu* lies in the structural coherence of its narrative. The storyline is developed through a logical progression of events, resulting in a strong and unified dramatic composition. Each incident is intricately connected, producing an organic dramatic unity. It is through this cohesion that the dramatist intensifies aesthetic experience.

When examined closely, the spiritual and thematic core of the drama unfolds in three principal stages:

1. Sārā's intense longing for motherhood and the suffering caused by the non-fulfilment of this desire.
 2. The fulfilment of that desire through Dionis.
 3. The resulting psychological disturbance in Thēgiris, culminating in the death of the child at his hands.
- These events are carefully arranged in accordance with a well-crafted dramatic structure. The central meaning intended by the playwright is often articulated through the chorus. By directing the audience's attention toward the sea, the dramatist symbolically presents the overarching meaning of the entire play, thereby stirring the emotional depths of the spectators.

The life of fishermen serves as the dramatic backdrop. Human existence marked by endless struggles, hardships, and uncertainties from birth to death is compared to the vast and terrifying ocean, whose depth and boundaries cannot be fully grasped. Through this powerful metaphor, the dramatist presents before us a fragment of human life within a familiar Sri Lankan setting. In doing so, he reveals a profound social problem and invites the audience to reflect upon how such issues may be confronted in real life.

The symbolic use of the ocean to represent the depth of human life is remarkably effective. Beneath the outward appearance of human beings lies a hidden, often frightening reality of hypocrisy and other concealed traits which the dramatist brings to light not merely through literal meaning, but through suggestive and resonant implication.

Equally significant is the poetic language employed by Gunasēna Galappaththi in *Mūdu Puththu*. Drawing upon folk idiom, he constructs a lyrical mode of expression well suited to performance. His careful selection of words, especially in aligning key dramatic moments, enables a nuanced expression of human interiority.

At the conclusion of the play, the dramatist offers a subtle moral reflection to the audience, suggesting that such tragic events could recur in human life:

"Do not go out to sea, my son, heedlessly by day or night; The boat may drift into the jaws of monsters or be caught by fierce winds;

Even Mount Meru may shatter upon impact, and the boat be destroyed;

Little one, when the boat breaks apart, who will bring you safely ashore?" (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:33).

Thus, from beginning to end, the powerful dramatic conflict that emerges in this play arises from within human life itself. The drama is constructed through a series of finely crafted moments, each evoking a deep emotional response in the audience. This emotional resonance is achieved through the psychological states carefully generated by the dramatist at every stage.

The dramatic strength of *Mūdu Puththu* is further enhanced by the richness of its language. The effective blending of evocative classical poetic diction with colloquial speech suited to performance enables a compelling expression of human spirituality. Moreover, the dramatist employs similes and metaphors not only to enrich the aesthetic quality of the play but also to embed its meaning deeply within the consciousness of the audience. These figurative expressions, often drawn from the lived environment of fisherfolk, vividly demonstrate the playwright's creative mastery:

"One will behold the face of a child just as the moon rises from the sea" (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:18).

"That woman is not a boat made of mere wood" (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:21).

"We are all like fish boiling together in the same pot" (Galappaththi & Sēkara, 1965:25).

Such expressions reveal the depth of the dramatist's insight into life.

Similarly, the poetic language used in *Yerma* is of great significance, as it too reflects emotions shaped by lived experience and social context. The theme of frustrated maternity in *Yerma* is communicated through the imagery of the poetry which embodies the dramatic action of the play. Moreover, the imagery of this self-styled 'poema trágico' is not unique to *Yerma*, nor even to the entire literary production of García Lorca. Rather, the imagery in *Yerma* is archetypal, just as it is in *Bodas de sangre*. In *Yerma*, however, the archetypes are expanded beyond individual symbols of physical reality to encompass the human dimension. That is, the dramatic characters of *Yerma* and *Juan* incorporate the essential archetypes in *Yerma*. The images of light, water, fire, earth and flowers, which are of primary importance in *Bodas de sangre*, are functionally dependent on the two human archetypes in *Yerma*. Thus, because of the interpenetrating nature of man and the cosmos in *Yerma*, not only the dramatic characters but also the entire dramatic action, culminating in tragedy, achieve the level of myth (Sullivan, 2007).

In conclusion, the success of *Mūdu Puththu* rests upon multiple factors: the skillful characterization, the effective use of language appropriate to lived experience, and the dramatist's ability to shape stagecraft according to his artistic vision. Elements such as costume, lighting, and performance styles display a sense of innovation. Through symbolism, the playwright creates space for the audience to engage with the deeper meanings of the drama. By equating the entirety of human life with the ocean, and by presenting a dance that reflects its true nature, the audience is made aware right from the beginning of the immeasurable depth of existence. Although some critics have dismissed the play as merely portraying the actions of a sexually dissatisfied woman, it is evident that the dramatist instead offers a disciplined and thoughtful perspective on the sexual dimension of life. The drama

extends beyond the portrayal of desire, addressing broader questions concerning human action and social responsibility. Through a carefully balanced and restrained narrative structure, Gunasēna Galappaththi has created a work of remarkable artistic excellence.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that both dramas share a central tragic theme the intense desire of a woman to become a mother. However, the social and cultural settings differ significantly. Yerma is situated within an agricultural rural society, whereas Mūdu Puththu is rooted in a fishing community. In Yerma, the heroine's childlessness is not attributed to her husband's physical incapacity; instead, Lorca portrays Yerma as psychologically tormented by

infertility and social expectations. In contrast, Sārā in Mūdu Puththu remains childless because of her husband Thegiris's physical weakness, leading her to bear a child through his brother, Diyonis. Furthermore, Yerma seeks motherhood only within the institution of marriage, while Sārā desires motherhood by any possible means. The plays also differ artistically: Lorca employs dialogue-centered dramatic narration, whereas Mūdu Puththu combines prose and poetic expression. In conclusion, both dramatists successfully adapt their themes to reflect their respective social, cultural, economic, and political contexts.

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