

PREFACE

There are three kinds of souls,
three kinds of prayers.

One: I am a bow in your hands, Lord
Draw me lest I rot.

Two: Do not overdraw me, Lord
I shall break.

Three: Overdraw me, and who cares
if I break!

Choose!

(Nicos Kazantzakis: *Report to Greco*: 1985 : 35)

My reading of W.B.Yeats's poems in my undergraduate classes developed in me my first love for Yeats. That love deepened when I joined the University of Calcutta for my Postgraduate studies in English. I heard Yeats from Professor Bhabotosh Chatterjee who taught us Yeats. His teaching further awakened my interest in Yeats's poems. Then a strange thing happened. When I joined Siliguri Mahila College as a lecturer, I was told by the Department to do Yeats's poetry with my students. I felt that neither Yeats would leave me nor would I leave Yeats. At this hour I began to think whether I could embark on Yeats's poetry for my future research.

Yeats and Rabindranath were kindred souls. Both of them were poets of the two countries which were governed by the same imperial power, the British. The pangs of servitude tormented both the souls. A desire for freedom from the shackles of thralldom, was irresistible in them. Consequently, there emerged a nationalist spirit

in their writings. This nationalist spirit governed their psyche and had gone a long way in shaping their beings as poets. Hence, I decided to study Yeats in relation to Irish nationalism in his poetry. Professor Benoy Kr. Banerjee of the Department of English, University of North Bengal, whom I approached to be my supervisor, readily welcomed this idea. The heterogeneity of Yeats's existence compelled me to wonder as to whether he should be treated as an English poet or an Irish, expressing himself in the English language. This is my area of investigation in this thesis.

Born in Ireland and educated in both Ireland and London, much of Yeats's verse and many of his plays express a revolutionary patriotism, a fascination with the history of Ireland, particularly the myths and legends of its ancient, pagan past, as well as his interest in the occult. His poetry also draws upon his eclectic reading in literature, history and philosophy. Nationalism is expressed through his poems in relation to the Irish struggle for independence from England. His contribution to the Irish cultural and political nationalism led to his appointment as a Senator when the Irish Free State was formed in 1922.

The present study is basically analytical in nature. Analysis of books, both primary and secondary, helped in a major way to formulate my primary idea. Documents, statements and resolutions relating to nationalism and nationalist discourses have helped to assemble my notion. In the process of analyses, reflections of different authors and critics of Yeats have been consulted with the view of supporting the principal contention. References from secondary sources and data collected on the internet have been of immense

help. I have tried to acknowledge my debts to them by citing them, where apposite, as sources for my information. I have prepared a bibliography following the instructions as laid down in the M.L.A. Handbook.

I owe my deep debt of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Benoy Kr. Banerjee without whose benevolence, solicitude and encouragement this paper would not have been written. His meticulous guidance, constructive criticism, clues and suggestions have helped me at every step.

In the course of my study I have sought continuous help from the National Library, Kolkata, the British Council Library, Kolkata, The North Bengal University Library and the Library at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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