

A Short Study on Mary Gilmore with Special Reference to Socialistic Views

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Abstract. *in common socialism is assumed such economic system in which industries are owned by the workers in place of private owners. It prefers develop social consciousness among mass people evolving socialist region. The socialist writers consider to focus on suffering of oppressed class or weaker section in our societies. Lots of writer are there all over world who reveal in vivid what they witness in their contemporary society in sense of socialistic views. Australian writer Mary Gilmore was such type of writer who noticed suffering of oppressed class people as well as wild animals. She imagined herself as a member of such downtrodden class. Whenever she found scope Mary Gilmore explored such theme through her writings. My short study will try to focus on how Mary Gilmore's views in sense of socialism as a lover of mankind affected in her writings.*

Born in 1865, Mary Gilmore was one of the Australia's best known socialist and loved poets. From the first publication of her work in 1910 till her death in 1962, her poetry was widely published and much-loved, despite the opinions of some critics who felt that much of it was doggerel and propaganda. She was the first lady who received prestigious Dame Award from British Empire for her contribution to Australian literature. Mary Gilmore was so well – known that her face appeared on the Australians \$10 note, along with the text of one of her poems. She grew up as the daughter of an itinerant worker, a carpenter. Her father obtained job as a station manager at a property, Cowabbie, some 100 kms north of Wagga. A year later he left that job to become a carpenter, building homesteads on properties in Wagga Wagga Coolamon, Junee, Temora and West Wyalong for the next 10 years. This itinerant existence allowed Mary only a spasmodic formal education, however she did receive some on their frequent returns to Wagga, either staying in rented houses. It wasn't till the family settled permanently in a home built by the poet's father when she was about ten, that she finally attended a school with any regularity. These helped her to know and understand the sufferer common people. At age 14, she began working as an assistant in her uncle's school at Yerong Creek, then accepted a position with the Wagga Wagga Public Schools when she completed her teacher's examination in 1882 at the age of seventeen. Gilmore worked in the Public School system well into the 1890's and began writing poetry as a teacher at Silverton, a mining community.

While Mary Gilmore was there she developed the socialist views that were to mark her writing throughout her life. By 1890, the young Mary was living in Sydney and her writing was frequently published in the bulletin by editor G Stephens. Mary Gilmore's first poem was published in 1902 in 'Australian Worker' and she worked in this paper from 1908 to 1931 as an editor of women's page. Working in the News Paper for a long period Mary Gilmore practically noticed the oppressed class in the society from very near. Her fiery verses established her as a radical poet and champion of the oppressed. In 1896, she immigrated to Paraguay as part of an experimental commune. She followed William Lane and other socialist idealists to Paraguay in 1896, where they had established a communal settlement called New Australia two years earlier. There she married William Gilmore in

1897. By 1902 the socialist experiment had clearly failed and the Gilmores returned to Australia, where they took up farming near Casterton in the western district of Victoria.

In 1908, Gilmore became the women's editor to *The Worker*, published by Australia's largest and most influential trade union. For the next 20 years, she wrote about women's rights, children's welfare and rights of the worker, firmly establishing herself as one of the foremost writers of the workers movement. Her first volume of poetry was published in 1910, and immediately made her one of Australia's most popular poets. She left the bulletin in 1931, moving on to other avenues of writing when her politics became a radical for the Australian workers' union including a regular column for the Tribune, the communist party's newspaper. Her patriotic verse was widely read and quoted during World War II, and it is one of those poems, *No foe shall gather our harvest*, that is part of the copy protection on the \$10 bill. Mary Gilmore's much poem unfold deep love for her native land Australia. Her works include six volumes of verse and three of prose, and literally hundreds of newspaper columns and other journalistic writing. In most of her works particularly some poems taste socialistic spirit.

The Oxford Advanced dictionary denotes the word Socialism as Political and Economic theory advocating that a country's land, transport, natural resources and chief industries should be owned and controlled by the whole community or by the state, and that wealth should be equally distributed. Mary Gilmore was basically a socialist and her sole aim was the real service of mankind. She was the real lover of mankind except the exploiters, killers and oppressors. Like Mahatma Gandhi of our India the whole world was her home and its people were her family. In favour of mankind she was actively associated numbers of social organization like Lyceum Club Sydney, Australian Writers' forum, New South Wales institute of journalists etc. Among these organisations Mary Gilmore was founder of some organisations and which had huge contribution to mankind. She was not only lover of mankind but also true lover of wild animals and birds. In order to stop cruelty towards animal from the human beings, Mary Gilmore involved herself some such type of organisations. Mary Gilmore was life time member of the Royal society for the prevention of cruelty to animals by human beings. Through this organization she worked numbers of praisable works in this field. Her love was all embracing and universal with no boundaries of caste, creed, economic status and religion. She wanted to vanquish all the social evils from the Australian society and wanted Australia to become a paradise on Earth. It is clear in her poem *Singapore*.

They grouped together about the chief
And each one looked at his mate,
Ashamed to think that Australian men
Should meet such bitter fate!
And black was the wrath in each hot heart
And savage oaths they swore
As they thought of how they had all been ditched
By "Impregnable" Singapore.

Her love was immense, universal and unequalled and enabled her to win the hearts of all. Gilmore's sense of love and socialism appeared in her poem *Nationality*.

I have grown past hate and bitterness,
I see the world as one;
But though I can no longer hate,
My son is still my son.
All men at God's round table sit,
And all men must be fed;

But this loaf in my hand,
This loaf is my son's bread.

Mary Gilmore's socialism aims at equality. Equality is the soul of Gilmore's socialism. For her, all human beings are equal. Her socialism embraces all with equivalence. Mary Gilmore was high priest of social justice and equality of economic opportunities for all. Mary Gilmore was a vocal advocates for women's right and lower section people of Australia. Her principles of bread-labour, non-possession and trusteeship are the ante chamber to social justice and equality. Her socialism was different from that of Marx and many other Western thinkers. Marx supported the use of force whereas Mary Gilmore believed in non-violence just like our father of nation Mahatma Gandhi's views. Though, the principles of Marx and Mary Gilmore in connection with socialist views were different but their aim was same – to bring equality, justice, harmony in this world. Marx believed in violent revolution to put an end to social injustice and inequality in this world while Mary Gilmore never deviated from her principle. In her some poems like *The Wild Swan* revealed the struggles of marginalized communities.

By 1931 Gilmore's view had become too radical for Australian Workers Union, but she soon found other outlets for her writings. She later wrote a regular column for the communist party's newspaper Tribune, although she was never a party member herself. In spite of her somewhat controversial politics, Gilmore accepted appointment as a Dame of the order of the British Empire in 1937, becoming Dame Mary Gilmore. During World War II she wrote stirring patriotic verse such as No foe shall gather our harvest.

Sons of the mountains of
Scotland,
Welshmen of comb and defile,
Breed of the moors of England,
Children of Erin's green isle,
We stand four square to the
Tempest
Whatever the battering hail –
No foe shall gather our harvest,
Or sit on our stockyard rail.

The poem, *No foe shall gather our harvest* is not only reflection of Mary Gilmore's patriotism but also socialism. Commenting on the poem, No foe shall gather our harvest, William Burt quoted, "Mary Gilmore is representative of an Australia long gone; an Australia which truly saw itself as a new experiment in democracy and had no doubt about its superiority not only over those nations to our North but over the 'Old and Tired' nations of Europe." In her later years, Gilmore separated from her husband, moved to Sydney, and enjoyed her growing status as a national literary Icon. Before 1940 she published six volumes of verse and three editions of prose. After the war Gilmore published volumes of memoirs and reminiscences of Colonial Australia and the literary giants of 1890s Sydney, thus contributing much material to the mythologizing of that period. For Mary Gilmore, the greatest sources of inspiration were primarily God and then the people whom she wanted to serve – the exploited, the penniless and the ignorant. To know the innermost realities of these underdogs and underfed, she changed her ways of life.

In conclusion we can refer that Mary Gilmore's poems express her strong social views having experience of her contemporary society. Mary Gilmore led an ordinary life and sacrificed all her comforts to be one of the bereft and the downtrodden. To become one of the poorest, the weakest and the lowliest, she minimized her requirements and developed the capacity of non – possession. Her heart was filled with pity for them. She was fully aware of their pains and sufferings and she always

tried to own them without any consideration of caste, creed and status. For her, service of the poor and the helpless was the service to The God.

References:

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