

## Spiritual Love in the Prose Poems of Rajkumari through *The Pedlar and Baul Beggar*

Shaleen Kumar Singh  
Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Swami Shukdevanand College, Shahjahanpur, U.P.  
Email: [shaleensingh999@gmail.com](mailto:shaleensingh999@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Rajkumari de Silva is a poet from Colombo who has been at the Prashanti Nilayam Ashram in Andhra Pradesh since 1981. Only just few poets in India have composed spiritual prose poems in post-independence Indian English poetry. Rajkumari's works are mostly published by Writers' Workshop under the names 'Ananya: One Alone,' 'Ferryman! The Paddler,' 'The Bowl Baggar,' 'Lord I Forgot,' 'Template Bagger,' and 'Ravindra and O My Fakir!' She also has three books of writing named 'Rama Jaya Jaya,' 'The Supreme Sound,' and 'Gan Diva and Anu.' Rajkumari De silva's poetry is love poetry in which she expresses her heavenly love for her god, for whom her heart lingers and her soul longs. The poet in Rajkumari has received spiritual ambrosia from Sri Sathya Sai Baba's ghats. Rajkumari is a poet who knows the language of love via quiet rather than words. She goes through more than she communicates. She has experienced the Lord's everlasting love in unfathomable ways. This paper aims at highlighting the spiritual note of poet's love and devotion to the common man as well as God. The paper will also throw light on the mystic self of the secluded poet.

**Keywords:** *Spiritual poems, love poems. Mystic, prose poems, supreme love.*

Rajkumari de, silva is Colombo born poet 'settled in Prashanti Nilayam Ashram in Andhra Pradesh since 1981'. Only a few poets in India have written prose poems of spirituality in post-independence Indian English poetry. Writers' Workshop chiefly publishes Rajkumari's books with the titles 'Ananya: One Alone, 'Ferryman! The Paddler', 'The Bowl Baggar,' 'Lord I Forgot,' 'Template Bagger,' 'Ravindra and O My Fakir!'. Besides, she has three prose collections titled 'Rama Jaya Jaya,' 'The Supreme Sound,' and 'Gan Diva and Anu.' Rajkumari De silva's poetry is the poetry of love in which she exhibits her divine love to her deity for whom her heart always lingers, and her soul always longs. The poet in Rajkumari has attained the spiritual ambrosia from the ghats of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. She says, "Mahatma Gandhi my ideal in the world; Rabindranath Tagore, my idyll in dreams; and Sri Sathya Sai at whose touch the journey of my years has turned into a pilgrimage." (Baul Beggar Title Page)

Rajkumari is the poet who understands the language of love, not through words but silence. She experiences more than she expresses. She has felt that eternal love in unspeakable ways of the Lord. She says, "You never come in ways that are known, you come by secret paths. You never speak in words. I know, only in the wordless heart." (Baul Beggar 28) Her mystic self questions 'the faraway pleading of music' in the 'weary time of noon.' She asks, "Is it a song or

only a tune? A deep-toned touch on strings or the twining of a flute? O tell me, whose voice is this longing and loss and search thro' the stillness of the noon?" (Baul Beggar 15) With a sense of bewilderment and awe, she again raises the question, "An endless moment trembles beneath my feet-but; where shall I run far across the sweep of the winds? To whom shall I tell of this moment, eternal with its secret call in the beating of the deep skies' wings?" (Baul Beggar 15) For the poet, love is such a phenomenon that grows in the heart and is found 'through the mists of secret dark' The demanding ways of love are always tossed away at the 'despairing smile.' The poet states, "Who can now ever take what is mine away? It has been won with only my eyes. No! No matter what you say, what you do, my love does not belong to you. You never can take away from me my love for you." (Baul Beggar 34)

The strain of love is bubbling in the collection's poems, *The Pedlar*. In this collection, the poet has written some thirty prose poems on the pedlar, symbolized as a protagonist of spirituality that enlightens and enkindles the light of spirituality, love and humanity in the poet's heart. A pedlar is a protagonist of awakener who comes and wakes up in the wee hours of the day and cries: "It is late, late in the day when you come our way,/"Won't you see, won't you see, what I have to sell!" During the conversation, when the poet responds to the pedlar's call: "O Pedlar!" we cry. "In the early hours/we have already bought our needs for the day..." The poet hints at the awakener's selfless attitude, who simply walks away smilingly when he realizes that his task is accomplished," With only a smile he gathers his things and walks away./But I hear his call as he wanders down,/"Won't you see, won't you see-it has grown so late in the day!" The poetic heart of Rajkumari witnesses several colours of the pedlar at a time when she finds him soaked in green:

What colours of greens lay in the sun! . . . tender green, fresh-green, milk-green-paalkora, thotakora, tampola, gotukola, but there's so many we've never heard.

"What are these greens-and those over there?" they ask the Pedlar in surprise.

"Lime green, blue green, new green," he laughs, "green painted with the colours of my heart!" (18)

At another time, the poet finds "deep shadowed purple" when the pedlar seems unconcerned with the sale of his plums; she writes, "Thro' the fair you little cared if none bought your wares; but whenever I had the slightest time to spare, my eyes glancing up from the buying and selling caught your look deep shadowed purple as the plums with faint laughter in your smile". (14) And the poet observes the dark purple-blue of melancholy in and around the pedlar when she finds that the pedlar is heading back home:

At the end of the day, as we walk back, I wonder, did  
you trudge to the market with only a single basket of fruit  
I wonder at those plums you bore .. but at the end of the  
the day a strange longing grows in me that I do not reach my  
home but could wander thro' your dark look, that  
dark purple-blue -- all alone. (14)

One may witness the motley colours of nature in the following lines:

So hurried the picking in our banana grove, filling  
baskets for the market fair- but gold-flecked green were  
our ripening fields of rice, mustard blooms at the far end  
and sunflowers, hundreds, raised their eager open glances  
to the new rising day over there. (17)

The pedlar has strange ways of teaching and awakening the seeker. Out of his sheer benevolence and magnanimity, the awakener questions:

Will you, won't you? Will you, won't you?"... what  
Does that Pedlar say? I call and ask him what he sells,  
But he has no answer, "Will you, won't you?" he cries  
From our gate. (27)

The pedlar introduces himself as some hailing from "Nowhere". His only introduction is that he is a pedlar. He does not talk much about himself. The poet writes about him, "Come with me, come with me!" he cries down the/road as I tend to my home. An idle fellow's worthless/rhyme! We hasten with our work. (26)

"Come with me, come with me!" I hear the cry as again and again he goes by. "Where will I go? Where is your home?" I ask one day in laughing tones.

But he gazes at me with dark eyes, surprised.

"Nowhere!" he says with a careless look. "I am only the Pedlar of the Road!"(26)

But at one point in time, the pedlar quenches the spiritual thirst of the poet. When the poet asks him to fetch a song for her, she is enlightened by him. The poet asks:

"Buy from me a song, buy from me a tune!" The  
Pedlar of Songs sings past our way, and I hasten to the door.  
"Pedlar, do you know the songs of Shraavan, the songs  
of Ashar? It is the season when the rains will break. Do you

know the Bhairavi songs of the dark?"

At this, the pedlar responds and says that his songs are the songs of heart which raises a storm in the poet's heart. The poet gives these notions in words as follows:

He runs his fingers on the zither. I ask him songs from the storm clouds above. But as the tunes pour from him, he tells me, "I know only the songs of my heart!"

"Buy from me a song, buy from me a tune. Buy from me my eyes, buy from me my sight, buy from me all that I know. Buy from me all that I own. Buy from me my dreams wrapped in the strings of the lute!"

I stand at the door-but when did the pedlar go?

Why, why should a stranger's soul rage in a storm in me? (38)

When the poet asks the pedlar for the tune of his songs, she finds that "a song fills the air, Varshageet, Hindola, Anant Sagari." The eyes of the poet are closed, and she finds herself "drifted far when the sitar strings with a hurting twang" and his fingers pressed fiercely against his lute. The poet in Rajkumari cries out loud:

O Man of secrets, a man of My Dark  
Alone! Will you never, will you never  
Walk by the dust of my road?  
The summer days have come, and the sun  
Of the heavens is scorching my soul. (39)

But the poet is amazed to find that the pedlar knows 'the colour that has died dark into' the poet's soul. In another conversational poem, when the poet asks the Pedlar, "What have you to sell?" The pedlar replies, "I sell only myself!" (30). The 'stray locks tumbling, and the strong dark face of the pedlar enamour the poet, and she shouts, "Oh, I will buy you!" but the charm of the pedlar is that as the eager hands of the poet reach out to get the pedlar, he gives her only herself:

I ran at his heels; I followed him to his home, but what  
did I get there? Only the needs of myself! My dreams, my  
Wants, my eager hopes, they filled the Pedlar's home.  
At the break of the day, I go with him, but he never goes  
past those old known lanes. "What is this new path we go,  
You who came every day past our village home? (40)

Similarly, in another collection, Baul Beggar, she longs for the mysterious bowl bagger whose twang of the lute enchanted the heart and soul of the poet. She finds that her heart is aflame' 'with his wistful face' her feet are "stumbling", and they don't know which "path to take." Although she feels potently the strange cry rising within her heart:

O beggar in your ragged robe, what have you done to me? I was busy with my household tasks when your lute suddenly called to me.

Why do you wander thro' our lone lane when no one lingers there? For whom do you cry, for whom is your pain, what have you done to me? (10 BB)

The poet Rajkumari asks the pedlar to sing a tune to her before the sunset. He halts and tunes the strings of his lute. But his lute exhorts:

My dreams I sing, all day I sing, but at the end of the hours, what is it I have said? Thro' the many curves and winds of my life, my secret meanings are lost to sight.

I look at all the songs I've sung. Ah, heart, you had so much to say at the start of the day but where has it now gone? I've lost it all in those winding ways of so much rhyme and song! (The Pedlar 41)

In another prose poem of Baul Beggar, the poet is found enchanted by the mystic and mysterious effect of the Baul Beggar:

When sorrows pour in life, how I long for loving arms-but when, at your lute's faint pleading tune, such beauty weeps in me then, oh why, Baul Beggar, do I stand on dark cold heights, my soul's blazing wonder beyond reach, beyond touch, beyond all men's calls-Alone, Endlessly Alone. (Baul Beggar 14)

The faraway pleading of music fills the heart and soul of the poet even in the "weary time noon" and makes her long for the eternal. At first, she questions, "Is it a song or only a tune? A deep-toned touch on strings or the twining of a flute? O tell me, Whose voice is this longing and loss and search thro' the stillness of the noon?" (Baul Beggar 15) And in another poem, she answers, "Your lute has flooded my world with its tunes all my life is but its heartbreak. You have flooded my world with your lute's songs, O Beggar, you have flooded my life with You. (Baul Beggar 19) The poet in Rajkumari experiences that a beloved form has grown into her soul, and the songs she writes know only one word of love. She writes, "Thro' all my songs, beloved, I have given you my heart to hold. Will there be one moment of rhyme, one moment of rhyme thro' this endless flow-when my breath will lie against yours?" (Baul Beggar 22)

And when she looks at her beloved's eyes, she sings with a divine tone, "As soft as a whisper, swift as the wind, secret as a shadow, sweet as a dream, silent as a hope long lost and in vain were words spoken in those eyes I have seen, eyes unforgettable-sad-misted, serene." (Baul Beggar 25) The ways and manners of her beloved is mysterious as he never comes "in ways

that are known", instead, he comes through secret paths. The words uttered by the beloved have risen from a wordless heart, "You never come as king or Lord, never in ways I dream. But only as Someone I carelessly went by-but on that one secret day turned-and found eyes unwavering that had long stood by my side." (Baul Beggar 28) At another place, when she tries to know her beloved's name or purpose, she gets to see this answer:

O Thou whose name I do not know, whose face I have never seen, whose words I never heard! In vain, I seek from you that which I knew long ago-that thy true name is the Distant One, and thy only purpose is to ever come to me. (Baul Beggar 29)

Finally, the poet realizes the eternity of love and writes, "No matter what you say, what No! you. It was done, not you who can take my love away from gave me my love, who gave me a thing. (Baul Beggar 34) He adds, "When were you ever there when my love grew in me? I found it thro' the mists of your secret dark, from the hours of my patient wait; in those far away shadows and my furtive gaze; your head tossed away at my despairing smile at your demanding ways". (Baul Beggar 34). She knows the eternal power of love, so she says, "Who can now ever take what is mine away? It has been won with only my eyes. No! No matter what you say or do, my love does not belong to you. You never can take away from me my love for you." (Baul Beggar 34) The spiritual strains have soaked the poems of Rajkumari and made her an enlightened soul ultimately. She attains self-realization when one reads the following lines, "As my dark glance looks up, let someone stop startled at our very sight, we two alone at the very edge of all worlds." (Baul Beggar 26) Her consciousness takes her to high fame. She says,

Let my words then be few... "I have known you, I have known you, O Friend of my past ways!" Death, My Death, grant me this before you make me your own that I come back to this earth. This one wishes you cannot deny, for I come to thy arms flinging my all behind... My Death. (Rajkumari, Baul Beggar 61)

To sum up, we may conclude that when a seeker's heart dissolves, all dualities and the consciousness of the knower and the seeker merge. The dissolution of duality occurs, and attainment of unity takes birth. The poet Rajkumari attains the unity of heart and soul after dissolving the dualities of mind.

### **Works Cited:**

Rajkumari. Baul Beggar. Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1996. Print.

—. The Pedlar. Kolkata: Writer's Workshop, 1996. Print.



Creative Saplings, Vol. 01, No. 03, June 2022  
ISSN-0974-536X, <https://creativesaplings.in/>  
Email: [editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com](mailto:editor.creativesaplings22@gmail.com)  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56062/gtrs.2022.1.3.3>