LITERATURE

ESSAY

Imre Kertesz's Fateless: Holocaust Re-lived

GYORGY URI KOZMA

OR me - a third generation "survivor", it was not easy to read Kertész' novel on his deportation. But he did indeed cause me a great sigh in relief - in his writings he manages to show the continuity between Auschwitz and the life in after-war Hungary, the life in the "socialist camp", with it's humiliating absurdity that was still somehow hilarious in the same time.

He causes this sense of relief in the reader by the raw documentary style he uses, by the near-quotation dialogue parts, by showing the banal everyday life that makes terror and humiliation even boring, and by showing that life in the camps did not lack happiness either.

Kertész describes in the beginning of his novel the last day of his father at the beginning. He is presenting everything through the eyes of a 14-15 year old boy. 'I gave him [the teacher in school] my father's letter asking if I could be excused for personal reasons. My teacher wanted to know the reasons. I told him my father was being conscripted into the labor service. That ended any further objection.'(3)

He is quoting with a tongue-incheek restrained irony: 'She said she hoped that on this our dark, dark day she could count on my good

'In my fifteenth year as a grownup boy, I could fully grasp the weight of the blow that had fallen upon us. This was her phrasing, I nodded, I saw that this satisfied her. Her hands moved in my direction, and I was almost afraid she was thinking of hugging me. But that did not happen.'(p. 4.)

The same ironic effect is reached by the exact quotation again, in the case of the shopkeeper: 'the shopkeeper said: might I be permitted to ask if perhaps you are shopping for

labor camp service? (p.8.) Kertész is describing the last evening, the last supper of his father (departing for the labor service. With a few words he can show us the typical and common sense hypocrisy and awkwardness of this family

already gone. It was a very bad wish, but I felt it clearly. Afterwards I could have cried, but I didn't have time for it because some guests were arriving. My stepmother mentioned earlier: Only the immediate family is coming. After all they want to say goodbye to you, its perfectly natural. The bell was already ringing. Uncle Lajos said of course the happy years of childhood had been brought to a close by today's sad events Jewish

persecutions.'(p. 12.) He then describes the alienation of the assimilated boy from his ancestors' religious customs: 'I had to accompany him to the outer room facing the courtyard. There we prayed surrounded by some old, unused pieces of furniture. God had to be addressed in Hebrew and I don't speak that language. '(p.16.)

fate of millennium of continuing

The boy is then working with other Jewish boys in a Csepel factory.

A policeman makes him descend his bus, he is sent slowly, through different waiting stages to the Brick Factory and from to Auschwitz. He is using his terse boy-language to describe a few typical survival tactics. We are encountering the expert and the man with the had luck. The expert is always trying to communicate with higher-ups, pretending he was German and ndispensable in the Factory. The man with the bad luck is immersed in his "had luck" (that he just wanted to bring some medicine to his elderly mother and barely reached the bus and anyway it was so difficult to get the necessary papers to leave the city). Both will die.

The expert is also trying to bribe the policeman - which the boy (at first) cannot understand.

The young boy with the ambiguous feelings toward his stepmother cannot suppress his real feelings of relief as he grasps that he does not have to go home to his fake stepmother: 'I had unexpectedly dropped into the middle of an absurd theater play where I didn't know my exact role and partly I had an urge to laugh because of a passing image that caught my imagination: the face of my stepmother when she realized

for dinner that night.' (p. 3.)

It is clear, that he is looking forward to this German labor camp, as if it would be an opportunity...Many young people did in fact apply for jobs in Germany or some "naughty" boys were even sent by their father.

The hero (the young Kertész) is slowly getting a bit more sophisticated during his journey: 'I remembered and understood somewhat better what the man with the seal face tried so hard to discuss with the policeman.' (p. 45.)

The others are still engrossed in their survival games. Another figure, the Rabbi reminds him of his Uncle Laios: 'Just like Uncle Laios...others called him Rabbi. He implored all of us "Do not quarrel with the Lord!" We should avoid that not only because it is sinful, but also because that road would lead us "to deny the noble purpose in life",...we were lost. But faith in the final mercy... His logic, I admit, seemed quite clear, but I noticed that he never let us know exactly what we were supposed to do and he wasnt able to give any good advice ...whether they should volunteer or stay on

here...'(p. 49.) Many times Kertész is not using quotations, but we feel the quotation marks - here he uses the marks and adds that he is quoting - another source of his dark humour.

He does not miss any opportunity to show the "human" - or banal - side of the horror: "We teased Silky Boy with a girl"... (later the girl will be pregnant and consequently will be killed.)

It is again quite surprising as he shows us the peculiarity of the human minds and the naïve misinterpretation of the situation: 'The name of the place was Waldsee. When I was thirsty the promise contained in that name invigorated

me.' (p. 54.) Also, even death becomes "banal", "everyday event", completely "understandable under the circumstances": 'A woman died she was sick and old...the event was completely understandable under the circumstances.'(p. 55.)

an absconder he leaves the com-

Kertész is recalling the wonder-

striped jackets of the camp inmates, whom he considers to be "real convicts", more real than himself, of course: 'First time in my life that I set eye on real convicts...clad in stripped suits of criminals

Kertész shows how we humans (at least how they) always try to adjust ourselves to the most unpleasant situations: 'Somehow things would work out, because it never happened that they didnt work out. So Citrom has thought me most important detail was to keep well washed..."Clean your genital area too.../because of lice/ (p. 107.)

Hunger is constant - and diarrhea is also permanent: but it is difficult to ask for permission in case of diarrhea. Once he drops a sack of cement - and he is then followed intensively by the German, but Kerté sz is again using humuor to conquer his persecutor in his recollection: "Never drop again a sack du verfluchter Judehund"...And in the final analysis I had to recognize that this proved him right.' (p. 125.)

Again, the writer uses his "documentary" quoting style to involve us and make us feel his alienation "Uvaga", said the loud speraker and we heard the noise of a distant battle "SS men leave the camp immediatelv

They said they will prepare some goulash soup for us. Only then did something relax within me, only then did I myself begin to think seriously about freedom.'(p. 172.)

He sees himself in a mirror for the first time since months, his face is old and "sinful" and his flesh is "like

Slowly they are arriving back to Hungary. On the tramway in Budapest, the conductor does not realize the awkwardness of the situation asking money from someone coming back from a camp (about which he probably never heard). A stranger does recognize his moral duty and pays for him: "Give him a ticket!"

His saviour asks him where he had been, and he had heard of this "pits of Nazi hell". When the stranger asks him what does he feel, he answers "Hatred" Against whom? "...Everyone" is the answer

have to go through many horrors? I answered, that depends on what you call a horror. Naturally... Why do you keep repeating natural when they are not natural at all?" And the hero's answers: "In a concentration camp they are perfectly natural." (p. 180.)

The stranger wants to persuade him to talk to others about his experiences. 'What should I talk about? About the hell of camps, I did not now nothing about hell. I knew concentration camp a bit but I knew nothing about hell...In hell you can't be bored...but in a concentration camp you can be bored, even in Auschwitz...How do you explain that? Because time helps.

By the time we know everything we slowly come to understand it. You don't remain idle for a moment...If all that knowledge descended upon you once right in one spot than neither your brains nor vour heart could bear it. (p. 181.)

And the writer's technique was exactly the same: he showed us how these events unfolded, how the hero had no time to grasp what was happening - how he survived because of all this. And he ends the dialogue:

'You cant imagine it...that's why you say hell instead..' And when his nterlocutor disappears in the street he tosses away the piece of paper.

He finds his old home - the apartment is occupied by complete strangers. The stepmother married his (deceased) father's former foreman (strohman) Mr. Suto.

Kertész is then showing the strange discussion between the neighbouring old Jews (whom we know from the family gathering at the beginning), who cannot easily accept that someone could suffer more than they did. 'Life wasn't easy at home either is their Leitmotiv (p. 185.) They give him the advice to forget the whole thing - but 'I could not command my memory to follow

He tries to philosophize, but his less-suffering acquaintances will not let him to draw this conclusion: ' lived out a given fate. It wasn't my fate but I am the one who lived it out

to the end. I can content myself with assuming it was a mistake, an aberration, some sort of accident...that never really happened. could see clearly that they I took my steps. No one else did it if there is such a thing as fate there is no freedom

if there is freedom there is no fate that is I stopped to take a breath. WE OURSELVES are the fate. I recognized that with such a clarity that had never seen before.. Whether I should take the local tram or the bus to on the way to Auschwitz (they too took their steps) Uncle Steiner stared at me: What? He screamed Are we now the guilty ones - we, the victims?' (p. 189.)

I think that simply, there are left no more questions open concerning Auschwitz and the German deportation camps. I think Kertész managed to give a clear and understandable picture of this. If I would say a word on it, I could only betray that I failed to grasp his book. But I think that he was causing me some kind of relief he took away the burden of notbeing-persecuted-and-humiliated: because he made it clear in his writings that yes, the survivors of Communism are also real survivors of inhuman treatment by fellow

But all these have changed now First, because present day antisemitism has a distinctly special flavour: those anti-semites before the war were trying to hide their killer side and their "nationalism" had a logical, understandable side to

...But those who are beginning to talk about "minorities" after the war and the camps and even trying to deny what happened then...well this cruelty is frightening. I am envying even the naivety of the hero of Kertész' book.

Source: Internet

IEVENT

The man who put Hungary in the world literary map

FTER Auschwitz, to write poetry is barbaric, a philosopher once concluded. A long line of poets and novelists have thought otherwise, and on Thursday, the Nobel Prize in literature went to Imre Kertesz, a Hungarian novelist and Auschwitz

Honoring the 72-year-old Budapest Jew for his uncommon. single-minded gift for saving the unsayable, the Swedish Academy singled out his 1975 debut novel, `Sorstalansag" (``Fateless"), about a young man who is taken to a concentration camp but conforms and survives.

"For him Auschwitz is not an exceptional occurrence," the academy said. "It is the ultimate truth about human degradation in modern experience.'

Kertesz was deported in 1944 to Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland, then to the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, where he was liberated in 1945. Of the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust, some 600,000 were Hungarian

Kertesz is the first Hungarian to win the award, worth about \$1

Since the end of World War II, writers and scholars have debated how to make art out of the Holocaust and whether they even can and should. "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," the philosopher Theodor Adorno wrote

Kertesz was honored for writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history," in the citation by the Swedish

Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor who won the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize, applauded the award.

'He is a great writer," Wiesel said. "His style and his approach are of such high quality that he deserved to be given the highest prize in literature.

`Fateless" and ``Kaddish for a

Imre Kertesz, the new Nobel Laureate Child Not Born," his only novels available in English, are part of a trilogy on Holocaust themes.

In ``Fateless," the description of arriving at Buchenwald is made more horrifying by its unembroidered prose: ...Then it's into the hallway,

before sliding glass windows and they inquire whether you have any gold teeth. Then, a compatriot of yours who has been here longer and even has hair writes your name in a big book. He gives you a yellow triangle, a wide strip and a band, both made of cloth. In the middle of the triangle there a letter U, a sign that you are, after all, also Hungarian. The band has a printed number on it, mine, for example, is

64921. Looking frail but cheerful as he spoke to reporters in Berlin, Kertesz said he is finishing "Liquidation," a novel set in Budanest in the aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain, he said the work also takes a "last look" at the Holocaust, this time focusing not on the victims but on how later generations tried to cope with the past.

Source AP

ESSAY

Khoabnama: Tinkering with the Past

SUBRATA KUMAR DAS

KHTERUZZAMAN Elias (1943-1997) wrote only two novelsChilekothar Sepai (The Soldier in an Attic, 1986) and Khoahnama (A Narrative on Dreams, 1996) but he has created a permanent place in the history of

While Chilekothar Sepai is set in pre-liberation Dhaka, Khoabnama involves the pre-partition Bengal, It is known that before his death, he was wandering over a plot for another novel, that, he planned, would take the ancient Bogra i.e. Pundranagar as its set and the thousand-year-old history of Bogra as its theme. Elias could not be able to make his dream a reality, but we can realize his power to portray the reality in dream for which Khoabnama is an outstanding example.

Khoabnama is a novel about real historyhistory of the time of 'Tebhaga' that tormented and elevated the revolutionary Bangalee nation during the second half of the forties of the twentieth century. But before its climax, the division of Pakistan and India, which was later on unanimously acknowledged as a result of political selfishness, shattered the long-felt dream of the mass. The question of Pakistan-India division created a deep-rooted cleft in the relationship of the Hindu-Muslim communal harmony. Like the other states of undivided India, Bengal also experienced a harsh time of communal riotthat commenced first in Kolkata and afterwards spread throughout all the parts of Bengal, Huge bloodshed and migration were the usual consequences. Akhteruzzaman Elias has delineated this infamous time with

his mighty pen. The novel opens with Tamijer Bap (his real name is never exposed) and in the very first paragraph the myths related to Tomijer Bap and Munshi Boytullah Shah. Tamijer Bap lives a mysterious life and socially he is believed to be a mysterious man also. When the story narrates how hundreds of years before Boytullah Shah fought with British soldiers on his way to Mahasthan, history gets mixed up with myth. In the inter-weaving of history and myth, the presence of reality is also felt. We get the description of the villages, their people and geography, their modes of life also. Throughout the whole novel this blending of myth, history

and reality takes the upper hand. In the novel Tamii may be considered as a significant character who shares most of the incidents of Khoabnama indirectly or directly. Tamii's stepmother Kulsum inherits some uncommon heritage. Kulsum's grand father Cherag Ali was believed to have some mysterious power. Cherag Ali's main treasure was his book 'Khoabnama' that could tell the meaning of dreams. Cherag Ali passed away long before, and resultantly Khoabnama' is now in possession of Kulsum. Thus Tamij is the member of such a family tradition in which the other two members are not actually sane. With such an unreal and dream-like time the story opens when due to the Second

World War prices of all commodities

are going up rapidly and affecting even the agrarian village life. Famine and massacre of hundreds of thousands of people are the two common results of that War. Before settling down in a peaceful situation the Tebhaga

movement starts. Tamij and many of his fellow men are inspired by this movement but the unfortunate incidents like Hindu-Muslims riot and Separation of India cause meteoric change in their belief and deeds. And thus true dreams of the common people of this sail again get shattered. Thus Akhteruzzaman Elias presents the shattering of through hic draa delineation.

The role of Hindu-Muslim riot gets due attention in the novel. The riot first started in August 1946 in Kolkata. The huge killing of the Muslim by the Hindu miscreants was reciprocated. Even the remote villages can not be saved from this flare. The Hindu-Muslim communal harmony for hundreds of years suffers an irreparable havoc. Before Khoabnama Bangla novel had a very small number of instances in which the representation of Hindu-Muslim riot and the interpretation could satisfy the readers. Probably no Bangla novel has been written that can be a counterpart to Krishan Chandar's Gaddar or Kushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, Even Riot by Shahi Tharoor is also a worthwhile example in terms of commu-

nal disharmony. While the movement for an independent Pakistan becomes a possibility, Anandabazar Patrika creates a great hue and cry in Mukunda Saha's shop. The news reports that the Muslims are killing the Hindus in Kolkata. If also says that Suhrawardy himself has come out of his house with a pistol to kill the Hindus. But the truth is just the opposite as is found out by Baikuntha. Thus the incident of Kolkata creates a mixed feelings in the villages. Meanwhile the agitated mob of Majhi Para tries to attack the Kachhari of the Zamindar. Elias does not hesitate to explore the inner causes of such incidents. Leaders of the uprising middle class people instigate and lead the common folk. The common people get no return from these incidents but the instigators benefit hugely. In such an occurrence Dasharath of Kamarpara succumbs to death. After some days when Afsar Majhi, who sets the house of Dasharath on fire, goes to Kamarpara secretly and aets himself killed.

Refugee problem is another consequence of the partition of India. Khoabnama also treats the sufferings and agonies of the refuges much meticulously. Abdul Aziz buys the house of Kartik Bhaduri in the town. The inscription of 'Om' or 'Sree Sankaralaya' on the house door declares its recent history very

clearly but silently We must admit that Khoabnama is not a novel of Tebhaga movement, rather it has only the shade of that momentous event that occurred around the year 1946 and ended in 1950. We know that Tamij i.e. the protagonist of the novel as well as his fellow mates had dreamt of Tebhaga but as is usual none of their dreams meet any success. In the last part of the book when Tamij is

pany of the family of Abdul Aziz. Without any prior information he takes a train bound for Santahar from where he gets the train for Hilly or Javdebour or Takurgaon and thus the story of Tamii ends in dreamsthe dreams of a family where he is an human being, more over where he is a husband of Fuljan, a father of his daughter. But we cannot but mention here that the bright hopes that we observe are only in Tamii's dream, in the outward world there were only oppression by the police of the newly liberated country Pakistan. The same treatment of the may be observed in the interior villages also, where Tahsen and his cops are only the instruments of Kalam Maihi in trespassing Kulsum's house, in acquiring

other people's possessions.

The uprising of the Muslim

society is also a striking aspect of Khoabnama Kader or his brother Abdul Aziz or their father Sharafat Mandal is the representation of that sect of the society. On the other hand Kalam Majhi and his police officer-son Tahsen are also the pioneers of this change. But the characteristic feature of both the groups is they do show the same aggressive attitude towards the property left by the Hundus as well as the property possessed by the insolvent village people. The conflict is not only between Hindus and Muslims but also the haves and the have-nots. Due to these conflicts the nearby town is soon crowded with Muslim migrants flooding from India. They lost everything they had. The case of Tamij, though a Muslim and a settler of this region, is no better than those Muslim Mohazers. He also loses everythinghis father loses his good fame as a religious person, and at last in dire hopelessness he dies, his stepmother Kulsum loses her security and homestead and later on losing her chastity she is killed. Tamij himself loses his right to live in his community. To grasp Tamij's homestead and stepmother, Kalam Majhi traps different plots and last of all sues a case against Tamij which compels him to leave his home and even the

Regarding the techniques adapted in Khoabnama the term 'magic realism' is very often quoted. The main features are related with magic realism are 'mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic', 'skilful time shifts', 'labyrinthine narratives and plots' and 'miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories'. 'Expressignistic and surrealistic description is also considered as an inseparable element of this trend.

From the very beginning of the

novel, we observe the use of dreams in Khoabnama hugely and abruptly. Among all the characters Kulsum dreams most of the dreams. The first appearance of Kulsum is also in a dream. Dreams are very common in her nature. Her affinity to dreams is made usual by her possession of the mysterious book 'Khoabnama' that she inherited from her grandfather. Sometimes fairy elements are also intermingled with them. Stories about Kathlahar Bil and the concerned people are no less indispensable than fairy elements. As they are fairy and dreamlike, the writer has integrated the impossible and the possible through

The most impossible incident in the novel is Tamij's physical relation with Kulsum and that has happened right after the death of Tamii's father. Their subdued passion got some tongue inwardly very often in previous time (p 21-22, 58, 96, 121) but after the death of Tamii's father and after Tamij's release from the jail, their subdued passion is gratified in a dream. There are other people also who possesses affinity towards Kulsum, Keramat Ali, the husband of Fuljan but who does not live with the family now and roams through the villages and composes and sings songs has a very deep rooted liking (p-215) for Kulsum. The origin of his desire is caused from the long heritage of Kulsum. Moreover the book of Cherag Ali is an attraction for him. Because he believes that book is the inspirator of all his songs. He thinks if he misses the blessing of Cherag Ali, he will lose his power to compose songs. The other person who relishes a carnival desire for Kulsum is Kalam Majhi. Kalam Maihi appears before her as a saviour (n-224) but her real attitude is not unexposed to Kulsum to the end, though not to other people

till the end. The cruelest incident in which Kulsum was killed was also a dream, which occurred near the end of the novel. Kamal Maihi enters the house of Kulsum at noon, as at night he fails to come close to her because she stays at Kalam Maihi's house at night where Kalam's nephew Budha's wife always remains near Kulsum's bed. The pseudo-wellwisher Kalam has done this arrangement for Kulsum because how could Kulsum stay in her own house alone as her husband is dead and her son Tamii is an absconder. So Kalam enters her house at noon (starts at p-330 and continues up to p-336). He tries to rape Kulsum there and at last in a very mysterious series of incidents Kulsum is killed. At first Kalam sees Keramat Ali at the door and mistakenly recognises him as Tamij. When Kalam enters her house Kulsum is talking in her dream and thus the horrendous spectacle is displayed. Seeing Kalam Majhi at Kulsum's

Split Thoughts

MUJIB RAHMAN

Hope assuages

Endurance enhances

But ashes inspire most

Dogs turn into gods

It shows its zeal

Politics breeds ominous gods

Mind, the most slippery eel

Nobody can tell when and where

A seedling to a tree

Love, a passion

house. Keramat retreats but he does not disappear forever. He feels some danger befalling on Kulsum and his appreance gets strengthened when Kulsum in her dream addresses Tamijer Bap and tells What are you seeing? Don't you see what Kalam Majhi is doing with me?' which is presented before Keramat as an appeal to himself And thus the rape-scene takes a different robethe boti (a domestic fish and vegetables cutter) comes up to Keramat's hand which hits Kalam Majhi. But Kalam by then springs up from Kulsum's reclining body. Though the boti hitting on the his elbow of Kalam hits Kulsum's

breast and she succumbs to death Breastless Kulsum denotes some more significance in the novelthe loss of beauty as well as the loss of completeness. Such an another incomplete one-breasted woman we meet in the refuge camp The woman was raped and later on the Hundus in Bihar (pp-300-301) cut off one of her breasts. At the time of seeing her, Keramat visualizes one breasted Kulsum, which comes into truth at the end of the novel. The loss of one breast by two women both Muslimone by the Hindus one the Muslimsadds a special meaning to the whole plot of the novelthe hest of which denotes the separation of India and Pakistan for which Bengal was divided and was made incompletethat incompleteness is vet to be completed, history

When Khoabnama meets the end. Tamii does not meet Fulian and Sakhinahis daughter from Fulian We meet him earlier where in his absconding life Tamij makes his tour to the northern zone where Tebhaga reached its climax. At the end of the novel Sakhina is seen with Fulian at Kathlahar Bil where Sakhina remakes her connection with her forefathers where remains the long hereditary connection only, nothing

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BOOK REVIEW

Distinctly Different

Rahman Chowdhury Bangla Academy, January 2001 Price: Taka 45 ISBN 984-07-41055

RIRHANAK, a play by Rahman Chowdhury, is published by Bangla Academy in January 2001. This play is different from conventional Bangla Dramas in many aspects. It is historical in general, but not in particular. It reads like a Greek classic, but modern and dialectic in its treatment of history and indigenous in substance. Two different periods of history the 4th century Greece and Bangladesh's politics of two decades earlierhave been woven together into a single fabric

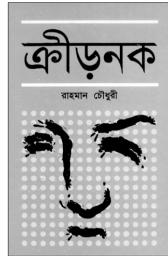
When Jesus Christ was born in a

poor Jewish family in Bethlehem near Jerusalem, Rome was a vast empire. Judia, Spain, France, Greece, Egypt, i.e., all the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea were under its rule. Christ was hated by the Jews for his attempt to amend Judaism and was crucified by Pontius Pillet, the Roman administrator of Jerusalem, for his effort to free slaves and save noor farmers from oppression by their masters. After Christ's tragic death his disciples made up stories of his being the son of God, having risen from death and changed his saying to make broader appeal. They made him proclaimed as to have come into the world to create conflicts a flagbearer of universal peace. The dead Christ became much stronger than the living Christ. His sayings spread all over Rome. In fury, the Roman rulers persecuted Christians throughout the first two centuries until Constatine the Great came to power in AD 337. He realised the power of this leading religion to bring him to power to make peace between feuding classes and rebuild Rome which was by then in the process of decline. He adopted Christianity and did for it what Ashoka did for Buddhism in Asia. After that the once persecuted religion itself turned in to a persecutor. Roman and Greek traditional religions, the mythical gods began to retreat in face of this new overpowering religion. Then in AD 361 Julian, the nephew of Constantine. ascended the throne. He prohibited Christian preaching and tried to revive the old Roman gods. So Christians called him the Apostate or the traitor. This attempt ended at his death. Christianity again began to dominate the empire

The period that Rahman Chowdhurv has taken into account for Krirhanak is this last period of the 4th century of the Roman Empire. He has imagined a Greek state Theus after the name of Prometheus, the Greek god who stole fire for mankind from the gods' world and incurred their anger and suffered punishment. The playwright has further imagined that. Theus gained freedom from Roman rule after a bloody struggle. Sadly, after independence her funding leader got killed in a military coup and Holofernss, the General, came to power. Holoferness was secular and patriotic. He did not prevent the revival of the ancient idolatry Greek religions and introduced many

people-oriented economic policies But trouble erupted when Zekonetta, a Christian who opposed Theus's independence struggle, came to the country from Rome and spread religious fanaticism with the purpose of possessing the throne. She was a widow with two young sons equally fanatic. Her elder son killed Cafis, the mayor of the capital city, because he was an atheist. Holoferness' power was put to risk by the fact that Nikius, the nephew of the martyred king, began an opposition movement in the country The play unfolds a the trial of Zekonetta in the court of Holoferness and the story goes

During Zekonetta's trial the



murderer of Cafis was caught Angry soldiers cut off his tongue and produced him at the court. Zekoneta appealed to Cais's wife Jocasta, the best actress and singer of the temple of Bacchus and most dear to . Holoferness, to forgive her son and spare his life. As Jocasta was unmoved, he was put to death. The opposition leader Nikus, who was Holoferness' comrade fighter in the independence struggle, joined hands with Zekonetta to topple the government. The courtiers suggested the king to marry Zekonetta because it would split the opposition movement and also earn him necessary support from Christian countries. S Zekonetta, the archenemy of the king, became his bedfellow in both the literal and political sense. Zekonetta took revenge for her son's death by setting her other son Histaphus on Jocasta. He raped Jocasta and killed both her and her new lover Sastratus, a popular voung poet. Jocasta was the sister of Cronus, the chief justice of Theus, and moreover Holofernes loved her like his own sister. This killing angered Holoferness to an unbear able extent. It was, in Holoferness' words, 'to snatch away the moon from the front of child's eve He set a

his spy machinery to catch the killer. When Histaphus came home Zekonetta, in fear, checked the buttons on his shirt, because the first son was caught for a button found torn off in Cafis's hand. This time they were all right, so she calmed. She at once called on General Brassidus, gave him a precious gift and requested him to tell her first if the name of the unknown killer came out. Brassidus accordance with his promise

disclosed the name first to the queen. The queen lured him

With her physical beauty and they both planned how to make arrangement for Histaphus's escape from the country before he was caught. In a dramatic suspense the king came across them and declared to the General's surprise that the killer had been arrested. He also said that not to allow anyone any chance to make any request in favour of the perpetrator, he had already announced his death sentence and it might have been executed by that time.

death Zekonetta together with the General and Krunmer, a one-time friend of the king and a renowned businessman whose interest was severely damaged by Holoferness' policies, made up a plot to kill the king. According to the plot, the night when Holoferness returned to the palace from a theater in the temple of Bacchus. Zekonetta offered him a cup of wine mixed with hemlock From a few sips Holoferness realised the plot and yet drank the whole of it in the glass. He informed the queen that he used to take opium which would inactivate the poison which the gueen was unaware of Holoferness got up and caught hold of the hand of the traitor, but at once Brassidus came out from his hiding place and knifed the king in the back. Before dying Holoferness said. 'only dogs in the world never bite their masters'. In Krirhanak two characters

glass merchant Krunmer and king Holoferness, are delineated with unforgettable excellence. Krunmer the capitalist as a person is shrewd, sophisticated, ruthless, quite uncompromising in matters of financial profit and down-to-earth. One day the poor young man Drimus, who discovered a king of glass that did not break, came to him for his help in marketing this unprecedented product. Krunmer generously bought all the glass products the young man had so far made. Then he committed a cold-blooded murder, because as a glass merchant he had no use of the kind of glass which did not break after once bought. On the other hand Holoferness, once a protege of Krunmer, is power loving but wise, secular, patriotic and soft minded too. Both are firmly determined to achieve their goals. There are quite a number of

allusions of classical literature that cannot go unnoticed to readers. But they will render the play more, not less, enjoyable. The drama proceeds at a breathless pace accompanying a whole lot of intrigue, revenge, murder, suspense and dramatic twists and turns. At the end, in Rahman's Krirhanak, all these are resolved by an invisible hand of History. Thus, as Hegel stated long before, individuals of great power and passions are sacrificed at the altar of social men's history and abandoned like playing to fulfill some great and noble design of life.

Reviewed by Alamgir Khan