

CHAPTER III

RALPH DARNELL

Meadows Taylor's second historical romance, Ralph Darnell,¹ published in 1865, is about the growth of British power in India centred around the British victory at Plassey in the year 1757. It deals with the exploits and adventures of Ralph Darnell alias General Smithson in India, who finally ends up by marrying the widowed Begum of Siraj-ud-Dowlah, Noor-ul-Nissa. Therefore she becomes the central Indian woman character of this romance.

After leading the life of a gambler and a drunkard and as a victim of illegitimacy, Ralph comes to India, where he discovers that the English Society in Calcutta is accustomed to even harder drinking and profligacy than he had in England. Her meets with success in India, the mystery of his birth is cleared and his aristocratic lineage is established. As a matter of his reward after the defeat of Siraj-ud-Dowlah he marries Noor-ul-Nissa. However he is saved from facing the complications arising out of such an out of the way marriage - an Englishman marrying Begum because the Begum dies after a short period of stay as his wife. This is the brief plot of the novel.

Udayon Misra rightly comments that although the marriage between the English General and Siraj-ud-Dowlah's widow may appear rather abrupt and idealistic, such marriages between high placed Muslim ladies and Englishmen were not uncommon in those days. For example, Taylor himself had married the grand daughter of General William Palmer for his first wife, and his second wife was from the royal family of Oudh. Taylor's connection with General Palmer's family has helped his "to acquire an intimate knowledge of phases of Indian life altogether closed to the European writer."²

The novel has the descriptions of the life of the British in Eighteenth century India, particularly the Calcutta of Clive's time. It deals with the rise of British power under Clive, centres round the exploits in India of Ralph Darnell, a profligate nephew of an English baronet. According to Misra, "There are not many Indian characters in the novel. However by studying it one may learn of Taylor's attitude towards India and the book also offers some very sharp observations about the life, of Englishmen in India." ³ Moreover, Taylor's attempt of bringing the Western and Indian world together through the mixed marriages is noteworthy. It may have appeared unrealistic and idealistic at a time when British attitudes towards India were deeply influenced by Utilitarian and Evangelical thinking. The novelist seems to belong to that group of genial Anglo-Indians of the last quarter of the eighteenth century who,

though conscious of the great gulf that separated India from England, had a genuine respect for Indians' way of life. And they believed that there was in fact some meeting ground for the European and the Oriental minds. Taylor strongly believed that the Englishman was responsible for maintaining the gulf between the two cultures. In this context what G.S. Amur says is noteworthy :

His (Taylor's) awareness that the Englishman himself was largely responsible for the failure of the mission added to the bitterness. The growth of English power in India had brought about, not the union of cultures which Taylor had dreamt about, but a hardening of positions which was soon to assume the form of the Kiplingesque dichotomy."⁴

I

There are only two Indian women characters in this novel: Noor-ul-Nissa, to whom Ralph Darnell is married and Sozun, the slave from Affghan. So my aim in this chapter is to describe these two women characters appearing in the novel who shape and control the events.

Ali Verdy Khan, the Viceroy of Bihar, a neighbouring province, became ruler of Bengal and continued to be so till the 9th April, 1756, till he died. After his death his son, Siraj-ud-Dowlah, had succeeded to his wealth and power and

his wife is Noor-ul-Nissa. She is a light of beauty and is scarcely eighteen when married. Fair in face and with a 'lithe' gracefulness of figure, she is tender but lively. But there is no colour in her face because she is kept in captivity after marriage. Her skin is like ivory. She has dark-grey eyes, long eyelashes, and sweet mouth. But the Nawab does not care for her love. When his slave Sozun asks him about his wife, He is annoyed:

Curse her! Why did they ever marry me to her - a poor pulling thing, who hates me, and whom I hate as I hate the Feringis what of her? She is safe from thee, my rose - safe for many a days to come, I hope, and she may not where she is, in the vault below. Thou mayest go, if thou does not believe me, and look at her. If she die soon, there will be one the less for thee to fret about. (P.209)

It is clear that the Nawab does not love his Begum. It shows his utter disregard for his wife. Noor-ul-Nissa is in captivity. She is in the vault below of the palace. Sozum goes to see her. She reaches the foundation vaults with the servant, and sees a heavy padlock on the door. The servant unlocks it and pushes it open. Except by a narrow loophole, above which some green leaves are waving, there is no other light. The place has a damp, dank smell; but it is swept, and on a pallet in a corner lies a slight figure, which rises

Summary!

as Sozun enters. The lady is sitting upon the edge of her pallet. She has covered her face with her muslin scarf. She is sobbing piteously. She is so beautiful that Sozum praises her beauty : "Thou didst not tell me she was so lovely. By Allah! thou wert a fool to take me instead of her" (p.20). One is reminded of the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast.

Siraj-ud-Dowlah starts a campaign against the English and conquers the Fort in Calcutta. During this battle Sozun accompanies him. The Nawab becomes happy because of his first bloodless victory against English army. Then he starts the second campaign in Plassey against the English. The British army is led by Colonel Clive. Now the victory ~~is~~ is Colonel Clive. Meer Jaffier, who had married the Nawab's sister, succeeds him. Now the ^{one} ~~table~~ ^{is} turned and the Nawab becomes a powerless prisoner and ~~was~~ ^{is} hanged ⁱⁿ subsequently. After the defeat of the Nawab, General Smitheson comes and releases the Begum. Sozun had already introduced the Begum to him. So he thanks Mrs. Wharton who keeps company to the Begum. Then he takes them away in the 'blessed light of the day.' He could see the beauty of the Begum resigned and tender. Mr. Wharton tells Ralph that the Begum used to tell me that I should allow her to submit to her fate, and bear it patiently because it was God's will; and if bright days came she should be grateful, and if misery, still He was great and merciful. Mrs. Wharton praises the Begum and says : "O Ralph, I, a Christian woman , have had more blessed teaching from her than I ever had from my own people."(P.364).

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Therefore the Begum is removed from the captivity and is sent to the house of her husband's mother, the senior Begum. She took Sozun with her. After this Ralph Smithson also left India and went to England. But he could never get adjusted himself in England. He was tired of his new life in England. He always felt : "Oh I had never left India! Oh that I had never come home!" Ralph felt that England was no place for him - this feeling was growing within him stronger and stronger everyday. Letters which followed him from Mr. Clive, from young Warren Hastings, now agent at Moorshedabad, showed him what was to be done and men were wanted here to work. Thus Ralph rushes ^{to} India again. Sozun gets the news of his arrival and is impatient to meet him. On meeting him she breaks down and falling on the ground at his feet with a great sob she clings to his knees. Ralph tries to raise her and says, "Sozun! Sozun, dost thou forget me? I am Ralph-Ralph Smithson; not changed, am I?" Sozun rises and says, : "Yes, it is thee, I did not know thee at first. Yes, it is thee." Sozun walks round him and feels him all over again, she kisses his hands and kneels down. She puts her head on his feet, and remains there weeping. She pleads for Noor-ul-Nissa :

I am a servant of God; and all love is dead;
but for her - for her; dost thou not remember?
- hast thou forgotten Noor- ul-Nissa? Thou
art not married. (P.435)

Ralph's reply that he is not married makes Sozun happy. She tells him that 'life is dead to her.' Though she lives in the palace of the Nawab's mother and she hates all those things in there. She pleads further :

...day after day, night after night, we sat together and spoke of you. I told her all of our sweet time after you were wounded. I told her all. I told her I loved you with a strange love, and I could worship you. Oh, I told her all; more than I dare tell you. Then she thought you would marry Julia, for she was beautiful; but I said, 'There is one more beautiful than Julia, and he will love her.' O Ralph Smithson, you will love her, for she loves you, and she is so beautiful; and I've come all the way here on foot, or as I could, begging in the name of the prophet, waiting for news of you; for they told me you would come, and _" (P.435)

Ralph Smithson becomes, hesitant but Sozun persuades him "Come to her, Ralph she said she would love you; she confessed to me she would. My oath on it! You will be happy with her, and will bless me all your days." (p.436)

After Sozun left him, Ralph sits long upon the sofa. He thinks:

They would never give her to me; her people are princes, and it would be an insult to them to

ask for her; and if I did ask, all our folks would laugh at me, and say I was a fool.... and yet-. (p.436) .

Then he follows Souzun to meet the Begum. The children receive him with great shouts. Ralph Smithson agrees to marry Noor-ul-Nissa. Here, Taylor gives his opinion about the mixed marriage:

I do not argue for it or against it - I do not say whether it were right or wrong, advisable or inadvisable -I only accept as a fact that, in those early days of Indian life of Englishmen-Englishmen in power and high station - there were many marriages like those of Ralph Smithson's, which grew out of circumstances like his perhaps, or other- what matter? They were, and they were often happy. There were no Englishwomen to marry; men who went home might bring out a wife, and there were some who, like Colonel Clive, met with ladies in India with whom they could make happy alliances; but in 1757 there were few indeed. I have before my memory a beautiful picture by Zoffany, painted long after, in which an English gentleman, in the red uniform coat and laced and frilled costume of the day, is sitting on a low couch in an Eastern room,

and a fair, beautiful woman, in a simple native dress of plain white muslin, is looking up to him from the ground where she is sitting with a look of loving truth and quiet happiness, exquisitely depicted, which made a great impression upon me. (p.437)

There is no preparation and there is no courtship. Ralph Smithson pays a visit to the old Begum. She sits behind a screen and welcomes him with true affection when he makes a formal proposal for Noor-ul-Nissa. She hears his acceptance spoken in low faltering tones. He receives the Nawab's consent through Mr. Watts. When the usual formalities of sugar-candy and spices, of a dress of honour and other gifts have been interchanged, Ralph goes to Mr. Clive and explains to him what he is going to do. But Mr. Clive is perhaps not quite satisfied at first. He says :

I'd rather you'd chosen an English girl, Ralph, as I have done, but after all, considering all things, I think, were I you, I'd do the same. You at least know what she is, and there's no disgrace in marrying a native lady of rank, with a handsome dowry to boot." (P.439)

Ralph has deliberately cut away all the bonds which might have connected him with England. He has cast his lot with the English progress in India; and this will be a new tie to the people whom he is going to love. He could not resist the

Affghan girl's persistence. Ralph requests that there might be no parade or ceremony; and in a marriage of this kind native customs do not prescribe any, says Taylor. A few near relatives assemble; and on his own part, Ralph takes Mr. Warren Hastings as a witness to the marriage contract. Ralph does not understand the four chapters of the Koran which are read to him, nor the articles of belief; but when the "Nika" is to be read, a small white hand is put out from behind the screen, he grasps it with a hearty, honest clasp, and repeats, after the Kazeer, "that he took Noor-ul-Nissa to be his wife with all his heart and soul; and that through joy and sorrow, sickness and health, he would protect and cherish her as long as he had life."

After the prayer, the blessings follow, "that mutual love might reign between them as that of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah," and 'many congratulations and blessings are echoed from all around.' (P.439) Then the screen is drawn up by Sozun, who is within and raising Noor-ul-Nissa, she leads her gently forward and puts her hand into her husband's. Thus Ralph Smithson and Noor-ul-Nissa become husband and wife. Noor-ul-Nissa lived secluded, except for her husband's intimate friends; but with Clive there was no reserve. He could speak to her very intimately in her own language but he grew to like her. Ralph is satisfied and feels that he has done right.

Noor-ul-Nissa has been well educated after the fashion of her people. She reads Persian authors easily. Her taste and occupations blended pleasantly, with Smithson's. The ardent sympathy, the practical companionship of his wife are ever present; and gradually, indeed, a higher standard of love and respect emerges than perhaps Ralph had contemplated.

The originally loving, beneficent nature has its power increased by the comparatively free life opened to Noor-ul-Nissa. The perceptions of her intellects are enlarged and purified. She loves her husband and he feels and acknowledges it as a gentle person. She is never importunate, never exacting, but humble to him. Some sneer at first, and possibly to the last. The offspring of a noble house to ally herself with a Feringi- is degradation; and the wives of men of her own rank sometimes look down upon her, and are hesitant to patronise her. But Noor-ul-Nissa sticks to her own place and maintains it. She goes into camp, into actual war with her husband, none the less that noble ladies sneer or wonder at what she did. She refuses to become the channel of representations to her husband, or to exert the private influence she is supposed to possess, but her practical charities never cease; they are a stream full of benevolence, and to her the poor were without apprehension. They always addressed her as "She is our mother", and they say this lovingly and they use many familiar names for her in their houses, and many songs are written in her honour by local poets, and they sing at

festivals, "the mother's name was oftner on their lips than any other" (P.443)

As a mother, Noor-ul-Nissa is very unfortunate. She gives birth to one girl, 'beautiful as a lily', it 'blossoms for a while and dies'. No other child follows, and therefore Noor-ul-Nissa's life is more and more lonely and to avoid this she spends time caring for her husband. Finally She dies leaving her fretting husband behind.

'The light of trust and faith which had illumined and cheered all the dark places of his heart with a mellow luster he felt went out -and left him - 'lonely', 'very lonely'. (P.444)

The one precious bond which has tied him to India is broken. It is time for Ralph to go and he sets his house in order to leave India for ever, while Noor-ul-Nissa remains an ever loving wife. She does not have an independent identity as such.

II

In Sozun we see a faithful slave - very obedient and kind hearted person. Though Taylor could not probe deep into the Indian psyche of aristocratic women while portraying Noor-ul-Nissa, he shows a great skill in depicting a commoner Sozun.

In the third part of the novel, we come across the character of the Affghan girl, Souzun. During Ahmed Shah Abdalli of Candahar's invasion of India, a broad chasted, strong featured stalwart Affghan and his daughter Sozun survive. Soon, she becomes an orphan and is caught by the Indian gypsies, when she is little more than eleven years old. But her figure is tall, strong and well formed, and her face has a promise of beauty. She has glorious great brown flashing eyes, with long sweeping eyelashes, which seem to be coarse. Her teeth are white and sparkle in her wide ruddy mouth as she speaks. To the Indian Gypsies, she appears very fair; though her neck and arms are embrowned by constant exposure, her skin is white and soft. In the whirl of a camp life in the excitement of change of place, with low and gay associates, Souzun at last forgets the misery of her earlier life.

When Souzun is older by a year, she is taken to Delhi, and is sold to the proprietress of a company of dancing girls, to teach her profession, treat her rudely. One of the crones, Jumna, adopted her as a daughter. She is taught to believe in her destiny saying her horoscope indicates an elevation in life that she is in a manner venerated. The old woman had travelled to Bokhara, to Samarcand, and to every part of India, and knows her captive's value the greater if the girl know, dancing; but Sozun 'could not be adopted into the tribe'. She remains a slave like others, and is used for the worst of purposes. The old woman

used to say.

I love thee, my lily, I love thee as my life; but thou'rt too good for us, Sozun, I will sell thee to the Padishah's dancers when we go to Delhi for a thousand rupees. Thou wilt become very beautiful, and thy star already shineth out of thy fair forehead like a queen's, as thou wilt be."

(P.204)

Jumna sells her at Delhi and parts from her sadly. Before her departure, she tells Sozun!

I have got a good price for thee, my lily, and thou must go. Chunda Kour has promised to be good to thee, and make thee a queen. She is love with thee; and many a one will love thee as thou growest older. Come, my child, dress thyself in thy best clothes. for they are bought with thee, and I will come often to see thee!" (p. 204)

Sozun begins her new life, a grand house to live in, in Chandnee Chowk of Delhi, and an imperial establishment of palankeens, elephants and luxuries, where she learns all the art of her trade quickly and gracefully. No positions, no graces of dancing are too difficult. Her teacher is proud of her; and, as her voice grew strong, and

sweet, she starts to singing. She has not forgotten some of the plaintive ballads of her own country, and these old songs have a strange charm for her listeners.

Souzun made her debut at a public durbar in the palace at Selim Ghur, and is envelopped in costly shawls, her 'lap filling with gold pieces'. As she grows, she becomes beautiful, with her Affghan origin giving her height and carriage unlike many of her associates. Her fresh colour, and healthy ruddy complexion, makes her remarkable everywhere and she has a compelling ambition growing within her.

Chunda Kour knows this slave's value. From Delhi to Lucknow, at festivals, marriages, the durbars of princes, the merry makings of rich bankers, even the sacred festivals of Hindu Gods, and the anniversaries of Mahomedan saints, the girl dances and sings. She is given gold of enraptured thousands; It is 'poured at her feet'. Even the aged Ali Verdy Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, when Sozun arrives at, Moorshedabad, thinks no durbar is complete without her; and when his favorite son, Siraj-ud-Dowlah asks him and pleads that Sozun should be presented to him. The girl feels her destiny is accomplished and gives consent. The price demanded for her is paid, and she passes into the harem of the young prince to be- the gypsy astrologer predicts: "a queen? no; except in wealth and power, she could not be that, for a lawful wife was there before her." (P.205)

Sozun becomes Siraj-ud-Dowlah's slave. He becomes very fond of her. During her stay in the palace, one day he asks her to sing for him. She takes a small battered lute and sings a song. The Nawab is asleep because of the song. Sozun is living in the palace of Nawab at Moorshidabad. In fact, the prince is lured by her during her stay in the palace. One day she asks him about his wife and then goes to meet her in the cell. But before she goes down, she expresses her contempt thinking that his wife is a rival and she says :

I don't no fret about her my lord, I hate her as
thou dost, as I would hate anything that came
between thee and me. Ah, thou lovedst her once,
they tell me. (P.209)

Her opinion is changed and she tells the Begum that "you are Siraj-ud-Dowlah's wife but I am his slave." She feels triumphant now because she has a conversation with the Begum. During the conversation, she also says:"Enough; I have seen thee, and will remember and dread thy beauty; and thou wilt not forget Sozun, the Affghan slave." (P. 211) After the meeting, Sozun returns and meets the Nawab. She says: "I have seen her, my lord, and I have seen enough, Thou didst not tell me she was so lovely. By Allah! thou wert a fool to take me instead of her." (P.211) She is bold enough to express her opinion and shows him that he is a fool. However, she boasts the moral of the Nawab encouraging to fight the British :

Thou wilt be less than a man, if this be abandoned. Thy people will spit at thee, and the children will cry coward in the streets. None of thy slaves in the durbar dare tell thee this, but I fear not if I cannot live for my own honour, I can live for thine. (P.224)

As a result, the Nawab's army attacks the Fort of Calcutta, where the East India Company has its office. The war lasts for many days. One day the Nawab asks : Is the Fort taken? are the Feringis here? I hear no firing. Sozun thou hast been looking on how is it? Have they surrendered? Sozun replies: "Surrendered! No; the English,, they say, never surrender." She requests the Nawab to allow her to take part in the battle. She asks him to let her go to her people thinking that 'a woman cry may shame them to victory, She says: "I am a soldier's child. Oh, my lord, do not refuse this." (p.240) So she joins the Affghans of the Nawab's army, led by the Commander Noor Khan, she shouts the familiar war cry of those Affghans urging them forward, and using "Passionate gestures of reproach and entreaty as time after time they were hurled back by discharges of grape and musketry and by bayonets and boarding-pikes, wherever escalade was attempted" (P.253) Ralph, who leads the English army notices the girl, foremost in every charge and is quite impressed of her bravery.

During the battle, Ralph was at last face to face with 'fair glowing face with its flashing eyes and a sword between its set teeth, the slight womanish hands clutching at

the broken masonry, which a pile of dead beneath was being raised up and covered with their shields." (P.255) The Affghan army of the Nawab conquers the Fort and the English officers and soldiers are arrested. The prophecy of the Fakeer comes true. The Nawab wins Calcutta. Sozun tells the soldiers not to strike Smithson as he kneels with Mrs. Wharton. They are saved because of Sozun. After the death of her husband Mrs. Wharton faints. Sozun tells Ralph to wake her. She gives her water and tells him that Affghans do not war against women or helpless men. Ralph again and again asks her : " Who art you?" To that she replies: " I told Feringi, it does not matter; she is my care, and I can protect ye both. Take, her up and follow me. I hear the Nawab's procession. He is coming." (P.256) She stands behind the Nawab's palankeen. The Nawab is inquiring as to who climbed into the Fort first, and was holding in his hand a heavy gold necklace to 'bestow upon' the person. Ralph Smithson stepped forward and tells the Nawab that a woman has climbed into the Fort first. Sozun comes forward and the Nawab gives her the gold necklace saying, "Nay, thou hast earned it darling." (P.257)

Sozun is restless and wakeful. This is one thought at her heart- that if the lovely Englishwoman, i.e. Mrs. Julia Wharton, were but seen by the Nawab, her reign will be over. She always thinks about the captive woman. She orders, Nasir, to bring the Englishwoman from her cell. He brings her to Sozun's private room while she goes to receive

her 'strange' visitor. Sozun keeps Mrs. Wharton in her private room. she is in need of an interpreter, But when Nasir denies the woman sitting alone by the steps of the house, Ann, Wharton's servant, accepts to be the interpreter

Mrs. Julia Wharton thinks of her people. She and Ann are guided by the little slave, she asks Mrs. Wharton to bathe and dress in a plain suit of her travelling clothes. She presses her guest to eat. But Julia thinks of her escape. Sozun gets the news that the Nawab may be late in return in from his council. She gives them food and they all eat. Janum, a child of six, has been asked to carry the plates. This child is devoted to her kind mistress and works as a servant. Juma, the other servant asks Janum as to who are inside the palace. But Janum is not ready to tell. At last she tells the truth to Juma that the Englishwomen are residing in the palace. This news makes the Nawab furious and he puts the women in iron cages and takes them to camp.

The room where the women stay is very gloomy. And Sozun is restless about the safety of these women. So with the help of the servant, Nasir, she plans to release them. She gives Mrs. Wharton a blanket. So they go out, and Sozun follows them. It is a short stair, which ends in a small court, and Nasir leads them into it. As he opens the door which opens into the street, and they step out. The Nawab is there and seeing the group before him, gets angry. Nasir

tells him that Sozun gave them shelter in the palace. He orders the servants to keep Mrs. Julia Wharton, Ann and Sozun in the vault, where the Begum was kept earlier.

They stay there in the captivity for six months. During that period Sozun once requests the Nawab to release her or to kill her. Therefore, he releases her, repenting for his deeds :

So long! and I did not think of Thee: O my beloved, wilt thou forgive? Put my hand on my head and forgive me for what thou hast endured, and thou mayst lead me where thou wilt. I was mad, Sozun Oh, I was mad!" (P.310)

In the meanwhile, the Affghans got the news that the Nawab is in love with a 'Feringi wanton', i.e. Mrs. Julia Wharton. So they become furious and agitate against the Nawab's act. But Sozun meets the Affghan army chief, Noor Khan, and a reconciliation between the Nawab and the Affghans is struck.

The Nawab, Siraj-ud-Dowlah starts the second campaign against the English. Colonel Clive, the chief of the East India Company, wishes to renew his proposals to the Nawab, in the hope, perhaps, of gaining time for his march ahead. The Nawab is confident about his victory. He is in no mood to listen to his proposals, which Clive presented with humility. Clive's messengers are dismissed angrily, and the native army marches on unopposed, and without delay reaches Calcutta.

There the battle between the army of the Nawab and the English is fought. During the battle, Ralph is badly wounded. He is now a captive of the Affghan army. One of the soldiers raises a knife to kill him but he is saved by the timely arrival of Sozun. She orders her men to take care of Ralph and to keep him in a safer place. The Nawab and his army flee from the battlefield and Colonel Clive has the victory. The English think that Ralph is missing and they search for him and declare that Ralph is dead.

Ralph is taken to a village, a few miles away from Calcutta, which is one of the new outposts of the Nawab's army, occupied by the Rohillas. Sozun always watches him. For many days, she does not allow him to speak; but when his fever comes down, she sings to him, entertains him with stories. Ralph always asks Sozun about Julia Wharton, but she never answers. Their togetherness develops into intimacy. Ralph wants to tell her that he loves her. After knowing his mind, Sozun confesses :

I am thy sister, sir, now, and I have many brethren since I made my vow, and put on these holy garments. Thou art one too, and every needy, wounded creature of God whom Sozun can succour. (P.328).

Ralph's anxiety about Mrs. Julia Wharton makes him ask Sozun about her often. She becomes suspicious: " But what is her life to thee? Didst thou love her? She is very beautiful."

(P.329). Ralph tells her that she is his sister. Sozun feels happy and tells him that she is well, with one of the 'most precious of God's creatures, the Begum', whom she is sure that Julia will love, and the Begum will care more for the 'poor Feringi woman' than she does for Sozun. It is this close association of the Begum prompted her in recommending the Begum. She pleads to Ralph for the Begum's virtues and says :

Ah, sir, such a one that angel should be thy wife- so pure, so beautiful and so gentle. Listen! That coward Prince's good destiny was but for a year; the Darwesh said so by the planats, and he was right. Now men begin to say that the destiny of your people will follow his without a check, and that of all kind ye will be the kings. His power is already on the wane. Wait till the year of the Darwesh is past, and she may be thine. I, Sozun, would give her to thee." (p.329)

Sozun patiently waits for the opportune time.

By now the Affghans are discontented, and often speak of leaving the Nawab's service, and joining their former Emperor. On knowing this, Ralph inquires about the behavior of the Nawab. But she does not say anything, because she was his slave and still is and her life is his sacrifice. But he hears from others about the discontent and the possibility of revolution.

Repetition
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Sozun goes away and Ralph has a weary time without her. When she returns, Sozun has much to tell about Julia Wharton. After Ralph fully recovers, he is released. And Sozun's role of a care-taker is over. And the mounting discontent of the Nawab's army meets the severe attack of Clive's army in the well-known battle of Plassey. In the new regiment Sozun has a very different role to play. She becomes the servant of Ralph. She takes him to the Begum and he releases her from the Nawab's palace cell. And goes to England.

After Ralph's return to India, sozun becomes the mediator between him and the Begum. She is instrumental about their marriage. On seeing him after his return she is overwhelmed. So she sinks down on the ground at his feet with a great sob. She pleads : "I am a servant of God, and all love is dead; but for her - for her; dost thou not remember? hast thou forgotten Noor-ul-Nissa? Thou art not married."
(P.435).

Her anxious question is answered by Ralph in positive. He says that he is not married. She thanks God for that. She tells him that since he left her, the Nawab's mother is kind and keeps her till. She is well and has requested Noor-Ul-Nissa to be her daughter. But for her life is deathlike and all the petty cares and troubles of the zenana is hateful to her. She tells him that she came because of the Begum. She tells him how day after day, night after night, they sat

together and spoke of him. She also tells that the Begum knows all about Ralph, and she loves him too. She could worship him because the Begum thought that he would marry Julia, as she is beautiful. But she tells the Begum that she is more beautiful than Julia and Ralph would love her. She impatiently asks him:

O Ralph Smithson, you will love her, for she loves you, and she is so beautiful; and I've come all the way here on foot, or as I could, begging in the name of the Prophet, waiting for news of you; for they told me you would come...
(P.430).

She is persuading him and compelling him to "Come to her, Ralph; she said she would love you; she confessed to me she would. My oath on it! You will be happy with her, and will bless me all your days." (P.435-36) Sozun plays an important role to bring Ralph Smithson and Noor-ul-Nissa together finally.

During the marriage ceremony when the prayer followed by blessings, the screen is drawn by Sozun, who is near Noor-ul-Nissa. She leads her gently forward and puts her hand into her husband's. and says:

Be true and faithful, O my sister! as he will be. Never leave him. If he be sick, tend him; if he be wounded, let no one help him but thee. As the Lord hath heard my prayer for this happy

day, so He will hear it for that true love which will never die between ye - and thus may the blessing of the poor servant of God rest upon ye both for ever." (p.439)

Then hastily she bends down and touches their feet. When Ralph draws his wife to him, and Noor-ul-Nissa's head hung upon his shoulder, Sozun turns to leave them. From the doorway she casts one last hurried, tearful look upon them, and runs away. Where she goes, no one tries to discover. All they come to know is that she has joined a company of her people going to their homes. Ralph and his wife live to think of her as one who is a 'Magdalen' who has accepted reality and to work out a life of penitence.

It is significant to note here that like most Englishmen living in India during the British rule, Taylor also did not have a first-hand knowledge of Indian womanhood, except of that section which was Westernized. Taylor, therefore, relies much on his knowledge of Indian friends and colleagues who were British officers. On the whole, looking into the situations in which these women appear, one may notice that they belong to two different worlds: Noor-ul-Nissa's character is of a 'Purdha-Nashim' who belongs to aristocracy. She is always shown as a docile, caring, sympathetic woman. She always lives in seclusion, surrounded by other womenfolk. She hardly speaks to her husband even though she is supposed to know Urdu and Persian. She has not

been shown as an intellectual. However, the study of Noor-ul-Nissa helps us understand at least the British attitude towards such class. It shows their sympathy and benevolence towards Muslims. Here the Nawab is antagonistic in the situation of the war. It also shows how they respected the beauty of the Orient in those days. Here Taylor uses Indian world as an instrument and a backdrop as in his other novels and provides an authentic description of the Sultans and their harem. The mixed marriage does not bother a true Orientalist like Taylor.

As far as Sozun is concerned, she belongs to the slave category of Master-slave relationship though she remains in the centre of action and theme. She plays a significant role of an interpreter of India to the British. She represents many communities -refugee, gypsy, nauch girl, slave and a significant member of the Nawab's harem. She stands for faith, charity, obedience and above all, sincerity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. All the references quoted in the chapter are to Taylor's Ralph Darnell (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1865).
2. Udayon Misra, The Raj in Fiction (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1987), pp. 92-93.
3. Ibid., p.93.
4. M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai, S.T. Kallapur, eds. The Image of India in Western Creative Writing, G.S. Amur's 'Meadows Taylor and Three Cultures' (Dharwar: 1970), pp. 9-10.