

**Sobering Criticism of the contemporary Georgian society in Mikho Mosulishvili's play  
"My Red-Fronted Serin!"**

**Abstract:** The burning issue of social violence stays as one of the main unsolved problems in the contemporary world. It reveals itself in many different ways. A play by Mikho Mosulishvili - "my red-fronted serin" refers to this topic. The storyline of the play develops around one family. Mother working in the USA is exploited by her family members who live in Georgia and do everything to make her send more money. When she comes back she pays her abusers in the same coin, violence against violence. While following the action we understand that this family is a face of our contemporary society, which is unforgiving, hateful, and ignorant, without any faith. All of these factors contribute to growing violence. The playwright brings these issues into light and invites us to choose the right attitude to address them. Violence can't be defeated by violence. Eye for an eye is not a solution. Only love and forgiveness can overcome it.

**Key words: violence, opportunism, idleness, indifference.**

A play by Mikho Mosulishvili - "My red-fronted serin" narrates a family chronicles. A forty-two year old woman, Sopho, former violinist, has been working in The USA as a nurse for 12 years. She comes back to homeland to attend the mourning ceremony of her late husband after a year from his death, only to see that her husband sound and healthy is sitting by his own fake grave in the backyard. But to her even bigger surprise, it turns out that Chito, Sopho's husband, has married Shoka, her high school best friend and she is awaiting a baby. The money she has sent for funeral was actually meant to lease out the house from the bank. Sopho's son Toka, a shrewd and selfish young man, whose main engagement is hacking computer systems, is an accomplice.

Chito, Valiko Chitorelidze an incessant opportunist and a shaken man, clearly is difficult to define, but he describes himself as a man of artistry and taste and uses his self-created image to validate all his actions. But it must be noted that he is way too far from any kind of art and insight, as he is an utterly ignorant man, not capable of even speaking clearly, never finds right words and is void of any expressive power: "it just happened to happen... must have been nothing of importance, but still it is now... I put my hand on my chest, not hiding anything and telling the truthful truth, you know how it is, kind of different... a contemporary super "love story" (9 plays, 2012:195). The author often ends his sentences with three full stops, which is a metaphorical expression of Chito's broken ideas. From the dialogue between spouses we learn, that they went together to the USA back then, but Chito became home-sick and couldn't stand it there. Then he fell into depression and repatriated. But later on he unwittingly retorts the true reasons - he couldn't have been asked to serve some rich folk, nursing their old, washing and scrubbing toilets and cutting their hedges. How on earth could he be asked to serve those "bastards", a man of his artistic nature and depth. Instead he blames Sopho for keeping him wait for 10 years as a widower of a perfectly alive wife and for not being able to tell her the truth: "because if I had told you that I was going to marry your best friend, it would have been the greatest wickedness, and I am a Christian man by the way!..." (9 plays, 2012, 196). Through these lines we read the attitude of the author towards double standards played out in the society. The same action can be conceived as "moral" under circumstances connected to one's personal interest and "a bad act" -if those circumstances become unfavourable. Chito doesn't think that marrying his wife's best friend is "immoral" while the secrecy is

kept, but breaking that seal and telling his wife openly is deeply disrespectful and indecent from his point of view. We can draw a parallel to “that must be a human, a man?!” by Ilia Chavchavadze : “ such acts for sure were to happen in the past, weren’t they simple mortals too? But it was all covered. They made their business secretly- not a single soul knew about it,-the fact that you don’t know of any of such past acts, doesn’t mean that no such happenings took place. Wisely and silently they did it, because they could keep a secret instead of bragging.” (Chavchavadze, 1988:64).He suggests Sopho must go back to the USA to ease the situation, or if she be against, then they could live together, three of them: “it will be a little bit different, but it is still love, isn’t it? Different, a bit weird and a bit of that... than,, ha?” (9 plays, 2012 : 200).In the end he comes to putting his own blame on everybody else, but himself: “This rotten 21<sup>st</sup> century is a bloody mess, should not have started at all. We have lost our morality once and for all! And betrayed the only true Orthodox religion....” (9 plays, 2012 : 200).No doubt about the superficial character of his announcements and claims, he doesn’t have any faith, or is truly bothered by the decline of Christian Orthodoxy: “I will put my silver cross to buy your croissants....” Shoka expresses to him her fear of God’s wrath for such an act, but Chito is sure of good outcome: “God is such a good buddy, he always understands me and this time it will be no exception...” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 225).

These characters don’t possess any conscience.Trying to represent themselves and their acts as justifiable and hence honest deeds in the eyes of spectators or to people they have inflicted pain or offended and used,does not make any sense. M.Mamardashvili writes: “conscience is a phenomenon which is self-based, it is also a wholesome undivided unit,which means it can’t exist partly, either it exists in its full scale, or not at all. You can’t have half conscience or a quarter of it.”(Mamardashvili, 2013 : 38 ).

Sopo wants to take revenge by not going back to the USA and continuing to support her family, so Toko, Shoka and Chito decide to bring Buckster, the employer of Sopho a weird-tempered man, whom nobody gets along with, to Georgia and keep their material well-being in such a manner. They go through with their plans but the roles change. Sopho is not going to nurse Buckster anymore, so Toko,Chito and Shoka become his nurses. Buckster sees their opportunism and idleness and treats them rough, calls them “bourdujoos”. Chito’s excuse is the following: “the whole country lives the same way” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 229). Thus, inactivity, exploitation and violence have burst out like a contagious disease throughout the country.

Toko is idle and takes advantage of all situations,just like his father. He is addicted to computer and social networks and can’t really imagine life without them. Financial well-being is paramount for him and he can do anything for it. His worldview is very superficial and shallow, he perceives any situation as absurdly funny. His speech is full of slang and deprived of any intellectual capacity. On seeing Chito and Shoka with forks in their flesh, thrown by outraged Sopho he turns to his mother : “ wow, are this couple of birds really struck so damn cool hard by you, Mom? “; “ look how jolly it is, those forks shaking with every movement....it’s a damn cool sight, it is.....both of them!..”( 9 plays, 2012 : 198).Along with all these traits he shows himself as a coward taking his Mother’s side not because he regrets his own deeds, but solely because he is afraid: “woh, woh,Mom, I beg you, put that fork down! I turned out to be a real pain too!.. a real asshole! I say!” (9 plays, 2012 : 199). He is afraid of his outraged mother, who is balancing on the verge of insanity and tries to call her pity upon the newlyweds and finally is frankly astonished that “she has really gone mad”.He is also timid around Buckster, who has arrived in Georgia, and is forced to run for his errands after a faint struggle.After being banished from home, together with his Father and Step-mother , having access only to the yard and garage , Toko takes his father’s side, but secretly from his mother. He is encouraging them against his mother, pouring fuel into the fire, saying

that mother is unfair : “those forks you got were not even “fair”, now if they had been, it would be a totally different story, but as it is now, they must be nowhere near to a fair aftermath...”( 9 plays, 2012 : 211). Toko and Chito have this recurrent phrase: “Georgia is to be glorified!..”-( 9 plays, 2012 : 212). “Georgia is to be glorified!”- this syntagm has long acquired a certain shadow of irony. The author puts the same emphasis on it to bring once more hypocrisy, inertness and moral degradation into foreground. Seeing the demoralized and desensitized society without a glimpse of hope for any future and hearing that slogan “Georgia is to be glorified!” causes only deep frustration and heartbreak.

Buckster O’Sullivan is a New-Yorker and a billionaire. He is the proprietor of a “submarine and bathyscaphe syndicate “O’Sullivan Abu” (9 plays, 2012 : 209). He is Irish and after Toko his name in Gaelic is translated as “victory roar”. As it is stated in the newspapers (carried around by O’Sullivan) Buckster’s wife tragic death (the woman died in twin world trade center terrorist attack) made him insane and he had been looking after death impetuously and foolhardy first in Irak and then in Afganistan. Rancorous and resentful he must have been trying to retaliate with the whole world and was suspected in the series of murders. He was thought to be “the long Island murderer” or “the long island ripper” or “Gilgo murderer”. Currently he is tied to his wheelchair and can’t bear any nurse but Sopho. He respects her much. He even learned Georgian for her sake. She was classified as a sergeant by him and nicknamed her as a Serin depicted on O’Sullivan’s family emblem. Buckster is a human embodiment of the super state of the USA. On his arriving in Georgia Sopho greets him in her own house with the words: “O’Sullivan Abu!” (then she takes from Chito a flag with Salivan emblem on it and waves it), “ the gentle breeze has blown and it is time to sing a Salivan anthem, three, two, one!” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 2014). and they sing along. For Salivan every person is a private soldier, only Sopho has the honour of being a sergeant. I think Salivan impersonates violence masked with good intentions of support and encouragement. He gives you shelter under his waving flag, makes you sing his anthem, become part of his culture and makes you serve him. If you want to benefit from my well-being, you have to bring a sacrifice. At the same time Sopho instructs her family members to serve O’Sullivan as devotedly as she had been doing for 7 years, only in that case “is Georgia to be glorified” otherwise nothing is going to be glorified by itself. Here we have two discourses: the first - the country couldn’t be saved without moving a finger and the second-the big part of Georgian society nourishes itself on an illusion that the USA will be the savior.

O’Sullivan is familiar with Georgian culture - if you want a nation or a human be subdued to your will, you have to get to know it first, to realize weak points. Right from the beginning Buckster starts with the family members torturing and uncovering their vices and wrongdoings. For instance he says to Shoka: “ darling you can shake it really well, did you happen to be a stripper in the past?” and when deeply offended Shoka responds that she is not “a woman like that” Buckster asks again: “private Shoka, when you marry your best friend’s husband, what kind of a woman are you then?!” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 215). When Chito claims to be a private and not a bourdujoo, Buckster gets interested : “ why do you have your own grave in the yard then? Or does it mean your weird God understands you again?!” Chito is making excuses again saying it was just a harmless joke. “ yeah, harmless it must be,- reponds O’Sullivan - you exploited your first wife and started a new family on that money” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 229). He calls the characters bourdujoos and their country a bourdujoo country. When asked what is the meaning of a bourdujoo by Chito he replies: “ at first I thought bourdujoos were terrorists and murderers, but then I came to the conclusion that bourdujoos can be your neighbours and close people too...in short a bourdujoo is everybody who is idle and lives at the expense of other people- parasites!”( 9 plays, 2012 : 228). His war is actually against these bourdujoos : “ instead of finding a job and trying to relieve her of

the heavy load you turned yourselves into idle indolent sloths.... and who knows, maybe you even are those Long Island murderers!” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 241). So murder does not mean only physical destruction, which can be less evil than psychological devastation of a human being. Buckster call Toko bourdujoo too and constantly reminds him of his guilt towards his mother. O’Sullivan has this belief that Iberia and not Georgia is to be glorified, that it will emerge from the Atlantic Ocean along the mountain ranges as a continent and will start existence as a grand Iberia. But the problem is that : “it takes power, wisdom, loyalty, pacing towards changes, or progress, glory and fame...” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 235), but Buckster does not think that the Georgians possess any such qualities because they are all bourdujoos. At last O’sullivan decides to marry Sopho, but changes his mind, because he blames her in transforming family members into bourdujoos and this idea is not unreasonable at all. He looks down on Sopho’s photo regretfully, which he carries in his locket necklace, and says: “ you are a bourdujoo too..(then he throws the necklace away) you have turned them into what they are now...” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 241).

Salivan may mean his historical homeland Ireland when he speaks about Iberia, or he draws a parallel between the Irish and Georgian national characteristic features - James Joyce talks about the same “lethargy” in his book “the Dubliners” and the reason of estrangement of Stephen from “Ulysses” is the inertness, neglectfulness and conformism.

Sopho takes the decision to revenge herself. First alone and then with Buckster’s assistance she tries to pay back her offenders. While she is unable to control her emotions, she changes from being confused to outraged. The real vengeance begins only after the cool reason steps in. Once a victim she now becomes an abuser. We can uphold her actions, but as we see in the finale of the play such an attitude is demolishing both for a victim and an abuser. She gets her revenge fully - and they all get their retribution, her husband, friend, son, Ellis O’Sullivan (Buckster’s daughter) who used to underpay her, taking into consideration the fact that she was irreplaceable , the only one who could get on with Buckster. When Sopho sees that finally Ellis is trapped and can’t really rely on anybody but her, she gets so much money out of her as she can. She takes her revenge on Buckster leaving him in the hands of her family members. Buckster is to blame for the initial misbehavior. She is a tragic person who would never thought her life would be taking such a wrong turn: “ I had one day off in a month and even that was a cause for uneasiness. I am tired, I am very tired. But I was pulling through and I don’t know how but I got used to it cursing the day of my birth. I can’t remember the last time I had my violin in my hands performing....I knew the only thing for sure, if my old men had died I would have lost my job and wouldn’t have been able to send money to you any more. Then the light would go out in this house, the telephone , the gas would be disconnected and cut out... and you have been lying to me ....I was only a bag of money for you and nothing more...” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 204). And the fact is that Sopho’s unconditional obedience and care for the family made a culprit out of her, because independently from her will and without any knowledge of it, she supported them to grow into idle beings. That’s why she is punished by Buckster in the final act of the play.

Shoka, like Chito and Toka, is focused on financial security, the life of luxury and idleness and as it usually happens she forgets about moral and ethical values. She seems to be concerned about many things, like she doesn’t understand how she ended up among the opportunists and liars , but she doesn’t even realize her own involvement , that she is an accomplice too. Her faith and fear of God is also superficial creating a radical contrast with her own actions. She is not aware of the tragedy that is taking place in front of her very eyes and the contribution she has made to create it. So she tries to explain to Sopho how they turned out to share one man: “Sopho, you know, we have been best friends since our first day at school and you know I keep falling in love with the men who are somehow and very much kind,

with that warm sparkle in their eyes...and I somehow fell in love with your dead and my alive this very husband terribly and irreversibly...and you know, is it really a big deal? This is not the end of the world, is it? There have been cases much worse than that!” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 197). Her language, demeanor and word choice makes it clear that there is a totally blank person in front of us. Like Chito she can't really verbally express her ideas. Her favourite repeated word is “somehow”, which helps her, like Chito's “differently and kind of”, to disguise the lack of logic,syntax or meaning behind the words. The only problem she sees in a ménage à trois is how to share the bed. What will be the excuse for Sopho's and Chito's sexual relationship. They are not “that kind of women” who can have sex without an excuse. There are three kinds of sexual acts for women: sex out of pity, sex to express thankfulness and love and finally she concludes: “it is not that I have not been observing the situations in the TV soap operas and I think it will be a sex based on some kind of kinda friendship...is not that it...is it?” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 201).

In the final act of the play Buckster presses the button of a remote control stick and sends the fake graveyard into the air. The explosion kills all characters of the play, except Buckster's daughter, who immediately returns to the USA after delivering her father in Georgia. The set of the final scene plays out awaiting the judgment day. Here the roles have been changed. Chito, Toko and Shoka take their place in a wheelchair in turn and Sopho and Buckster take care of them. Through this finale the author wants to say that violence can't be eradicated by violence. This thought brings us to existing social collective consciousness , which should be transformed in order to solve the problem. Sopho is aware of the situation in the country and acknowledges her own fault. Through her words we hear the author speak, those word sum up a bunch of problems touched in the play: “There we have a completely bourdujoo country. They live at the expense of their mothers, wives and sisters who live and work as nurses in immigration... you are right, we, who immigrate to work, are bourdujoos too...we pay not only for our families , but also for relatives' and friends' families..from time to time we hear a different voice of a not bourdujoo, who tells us to start doing something, to stop being bourdujoos , cause nothings is going to be glorified if we don't sober up , we will sue those voices in Strasbourg and all possible state organizations...” ( 9 plays, 2012 : 243). the play ends with Sopho and Buckster looking over to the horizon, viewing the bourdujoo country landscape with the look of“sad reprimand”.

The tone of the play is tragic and comic at the same time. The writer recreates real pictures from the contemporary world. The problems brought up are, of course, burning issues and the characters are identifiable and believable, because we see them in our everyday life on almost every step of the way.The only solution to these problems , from the author's point of view, is looking the reality into the eyes and acting respectively, which is a very important message for our society ( the concept matches that of “the letters of a passenger” : “ movements and only movements”...)

## **Bibliography**

Mamardashvili M. ;2013 Lectures in the ancient philosophy. Tbilisi

Mosulishvili M. 2012 9 plays VS violence. Tbilisi.

Chavchavadze I.1988 Works. Volume II. Tbilisi.

