

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

ISSN: 2278-9529



**Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite**

**Managing Editor: Madhuri Bite**

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>

***Water Please* (a Play in five acts) by P. Raja, New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014 Rs. 250/- \$15**

**Reviewed By:**

**Dr. K. V. Raghupathi**

**Sr. Assistant Professor in English**

**Central University of Tamil Nadu**

**Thiruvavur – 610 101**

Raja is primarily and popularly known as a short story writer, a poet and a translator. With the publication of the play under review, another dimension has been added to his personality. Though it brings me a surprise, he has proved his mettle with self-assurance and penchant that is in no way inferior to his poetry and short story writing. Dedicated to his friend, fellow writer, inspirer and above all a good human being as mentioned in the text, Mrs. Maggi Lidchi Grassi, the play is written in five acts with varied scenes. Set in historical backdrop dating back to the reign of the king Sri Krishnadeva Raya, exactly in 1862, the playwright beautifully blends it with contemporary situation with a sense of humour. The play is about water, how it has been deprived for long and how it has been brought to Pondicherry. There is no serious plot involved in it, it is simply a story taken from history and exquisitely dramatised. The story weaves around Maggi, a middle aged, white complexioned, short but sturdy French woman, who incidentally becomes the secret source for revealing the history behind the binging drinkable water to the residents of Pondicherry.

Pondicherry, then known as town is divided into two, white and black; the former inhabited by the French and the latter by browns, Tamilians. The play opens with the situation of non availability of drinkable water in the white town. The French Guy, the visitor comes to know that one Siddha who lives in a hamlet called Sombatta, near Thirukanur village, a suburb of Pondicherry, can perform this miracle. Maggi knows how this Siddha came to live in Sompattu and from her we come to know how a curse has fallen on the white town dwellers and the cure will come with a white man and they are destined to have water from a whore. Meanwhile the readers/audience are introduced to the court scenes of the emperor Krishnadeva Raya (Act IV) – pranks of Tenali Ramakrishnudu and the farting joke which awakens the king to realize what he has done to his wife, Thirumalambai and take life not too seriously. Still on the other side of the play is that the dramatist skilfully introduces the symbolic significance of the structure of Lord Nataraja Temple located at Chidambaram in the mouth of Appaji, a courtier, then the “Chidambara Rahasya”, the secret of Chidambaram, another name for Tillai. The last three scenes of the Act V are crucial to the play.

As the darkness spreads, on their way to the place of sojourn in Vilvanalur, the king Krishnadeva Raya and his retinue enter a village (Muthuthiriyar Palayam) and see at a distance a palatial house illuminated by beautiful and live earthen oil lamps. The king mistakes it for a temple and bows. It is here Tenali Ramakrishnudu intervenes and tells “Temples are all illuminated places. But all illuminated places are not temples” (118). The mistaken temple is

Aayi's house, which the king comes to know through a passer-by. Aayi is a woman of pleasure, a harlot. Soon realizing his mistake, the king orders his guards to enter the house and drag Aayi and pull down her house. Seeing her beauty, the king gets mesmerized, and he falls in love with her unwittingly. He rescinds his order and offers his palace as her place by saying "The hand that strikes is also magnanimous enough to hug the victim" (122), and let no man ever remember her and she is always his lawful wife besides his twelve lawful wives.

The scene shifts to a Landlord's Farm House in Vilvanallur where both the Landlord and the rich man, the regular customers for Aayi, are presented as disappointed and gloomy as they have lost Aayi forever. Now they could take comfort in her sister Oosi, as suggested by the rich man. We learn through the Landlord that the headman has been left with enough gold by Aayi, and he could use it to dig a tank in the very same place she lived. The tank will be named after her, Aayikulam, the tank of Aayi. Thus she goes down in history by providing drinkable water to the inhabitants of Pondicherry. Interestingly Maggi writes the play and hands it to the Governor of Pondicherry and receives accolades.

It is a historical play which tells how people of Pondicherry have got their drinkable water. To this historical significance the playwright has added elements of his won, besides the lighter side of Tenali Ramakrishnudu. Written in conventional fashion (five acts and scenes) with little complication Raja seems to have succeeded in presenting the details in chaste and lucid diction with a touch of humour as his usual characteristic style. The play can be adopted for staging and it is a feather in Raja's crown of success as a creative writer. More such plays are expected from his pen.