

## SYNTHESIS OF NOTIONS OF BUDDHISM, CONFUCIANISM, AND CHRISTIANITY IN PEARL S. BUCK'S *PAVILION OF WOMEN*

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*Abstract: Buck seems to convey here that the "way of spiritual love" is an approach to the Divine. She conveys that salvation can be achieved by those who discard the physical attainments of the material world and enter into the world of universal love. Her spiritual perception reveals that although Heaven and Nirvana are slightly different notions, the notion of reaching perfection through love and selfless service is common to all major faiths of the world. She instructs us to utilize our energies towards the world around us to spiritualize society and establish a brotherhood.*

*Pavilion of Women* is a novel by the Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck. The novel is the story of Madame Wu's transformation from the elemental realities to a spiritual height of human evolution. Her fateful encounter with Brother Andre, a Christian priest, brings her to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment.

Madame Wu, a prestigious Chinese family woman, comes to a momentous decision on her fortieth birthday. She is the virtual head of the household. She has determined to spend the remainder of her life in peaceful pursuits free from the heavy responsibilities that her position and marriage demand. Now she no longer wishes to have a physical relationship with her husband but instead declares her intention to find him a suitable concubine. She expresses it to her oldest friend, Madame Kang, who is now her sister-in-law. In the tradition of old Chinese families, her sons and their wives and their many children and their wives and their many children and servants all live within a loosely connected compound. The entire family is shocked at the thought of a 'second wife.' Coming out of the bedroom door peacefully, she decides "she would never sleep in this room again as long as she lived" (31). She feels released and calm, thinking that for any woman to cling to a man beyond the time of her fertility is to defy heaven's decree. She has decided because she finds her own fires slacken while his burn on. She now decides to live next to the old lady's court. The only thing she brings with herself is the picture of the human creature struggling up the mountain. Now she looks after the management of the house. Her two sons, Liangmo and Tesmo, have already got married. Now she wants to marry Fengo, her third son, to Linyi, Madame Kang's second daughter. Linyi is educated and would not take Fengo as her husband, who cannot read or write a foreign language.

So, Madame Wu engages a foreign tutor for Fengo's education. In the first encounter with Brother Andre, Madame Wu says, "she feels the need of knowledge of

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some sort. What sort she do not know herself" (119). In the course of time, Fengo learns the foreign language, and his marriage with Linyi takes place. Madame Wu's sole intention is to make her family members happy. However, unfortunately, she fails in her intention. She intended to make Mr. Wu happy by bringing a concubine, but the concubine Ch'iuming fails to add happiness to Mr. Wu's life, and he starts visiting the flower house. There he falls in love with a young girl, Jasmine. One day Jasmine comes to Wu's house, intending to stay there permanently. Madame Wu wants to see her husband happy, so she takes the flower girl under her roof. Meanwhile, the old lady, Madame Wu's mother-in-law, dies.

Along with her third son Fengmo, Madame Wu also becomes a student of Brother Andre. Brother Andre's teaching changes both the son and the mother radically. Despite her good management, she finds nobody happy. Brother Andre awakens the feeling of love in Madame Wu, and now she applies this lesson of love in her household management. She finds that Rulan and Linyi, wives of Tesmo and Fegmo, respectively, are not in right relation to the house and, therefore, to the universe. She finds them unhappy in their conjugal life and applies the lesson of "love" to them. Thus, she brings them on the right path.

With the coming of Jasmine into the Wu house, Mr. Wu returns to his old self and becomes happy. In this way, Madame Wu's purpose of making her husband happy is fulfilled, and she, too, feels happy. She gives her consent to Tesmo for his foreign trip and sends Fengo for further education in a foreign country. One day while returning from Madame Wu's house, Brother Andre tries to save the money-lender from the robbers. They beat him over the head, and his skull is cracked. Madame Wu, having heard the news rushes to his house. He dies immediately after asking her to feed the orphan children he has collected under his roof. However, her experience of Andre's death proves to be of great significance to Madame Wu, for it changes her whole personality. Now she decides that she shall no longer live out of duty but out of love. At this moment, she declares her love for Andre. She feels that Andre is not dead, but he is living, and he is with her because she loves him. New wisdom occurs to her, which alone she has never had. She reflects on her stupidity of selfishly trying to free herself from the men and women in her house by withdrawing herself. She had been angry with them because they were not happy. All this she now finds completely foolish, as she has not been able to tell them how to be happy. Love transforms and improves her.

Then one day, Madame Wu goes to Madame Kang's house, hearing the news that the child refuses to be born and saves her life. She stays there for two days at Madame Kang's bedside and returns with blood on her satin garment. Ying, her maidservant, draws her attention towards it, and Madame Wu, who was so fastidious, now only murmurs, "I forgot, myself" (253). Love and humanity make her forget herself. Thus, unconsciously, she does what Andre had asked her to do. She does not fully understand the change that has taken place in her being, but she feels that she is walking along a path of light, and "the light that lit this path was her Love for Andre" (253). She follows the way of love suggested by Andre.

One day the concubine, Ch'iuming, tries to end her life by committing suicide. Madame Wu saves her, asks her the reason, and learns something shocking. She learns that Ch'iuming does not love her child as she does not love its father. Further, when she learns that it is Fengmo, her third son, whom she loves, Madame Wu is not angry. Instead, she feels pity for Ch'iuming, so she decides to keep her in the house and asks Ch'iuming to help her care for the orphans. Thus while handling the case of Ch'iuming she only remembers Andre and decides to keep her at the house instead of driving her away. Tesmo returns from his foreign trip and lives at his house for ten days very happily with his wife Rulan and again goes on a tour. Unfortunately, his plane is crashed, and he died. Rulan is happy that at least they have lived happily for ten days, and those memories are enough for her to lead her further life. After some days, Fengmo also returns to the house unexpectedly, though he has planned to be away for five years. He goes to a laundry worker in a foreign country to fetch his clothes one day. The illiterate laundryman could not read the letters that came to him from his home. Fengmo reads and writes his letters for him. Then he remembers that in his village, too, his own people cannot read and write, so he packs up his bag and returns to his village, remembering the words of Brother Andre "To know how to read is to light a lamp in mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe" (303). He wants to start a school for the farmers and their children. Significantly enough, Rulan and Ch'iuming, too, have the same intention. Fengmo is happy with their prospect and thinks that they and Linyi, his wife, shall help him in his work. Madame Wu gives them her permission and thus gives the freedom to Rulan, Ch'iuming, and Fengmo, and becomes happy. Meanwhile, Ch'iuming's mother comes to the village searching for her cast-away child (Ch'iuming), where Fengmo has started his school. The innkeeper takes Ch'iuming's mother to Madame Wu and learns that Ch'iuming is her cast-away child. Madame Wu permits Ch'iuming to go with her mother. Thus, Madame Wu is relieved of the burden of Ch'iuming. Meanwhile, Madame Wu becomes famous for her patient listening and cool judgments, and many people come to her for enlightenment. She finds peace and wisdom. Madame Wu, whom all her life had struggled against her dislike of human beings, now finds her heart full of love for every earthly creature. It is Andre that changes her whole personality and brings her eternal life. She experiences the same peace and freedom as Brother Andre.

*Pavilion of Women* is a remarkable novel of Buck's depiction of Chinese traditions and the plight of women. The unorthodox story of Madame Wu focuses the spotlight on man-woman relationships, responsibility, and love. "The novel is a story of Madam Wu and her house and husband, sons and daughters, grandchildren and servants and friends. As the *Saturday Review* said: "Miss Buck at her Best" (Buck, 1968: i). To begin with the title, the novel's theme, as The New York Times book review says: "A searching, adult study of women written with high seriousness and sympathy."

Although many of Pearl Buck's novels center on themes of marriage and family, *Pavilion of Women* is a fairly radical approach to the subject of men and women. It

depicts life in China around the mid-twentieth century. Women's liberation was still catching its breath before the next big battle; the sexual revolution was twenty years in the future. However, Buck tackles these issues head-on through the story of Madame Wu with a frankness that was probably shocking at the time. About the theme of the novel, Deshpande's observation is significant. He says: "Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* (1946) seems to be a unique novel. Its uniqueness is threefold. First, the religious encounter in the novel does not have the usual background of orthodox and institutional religion; second, it is totally devoted to mysticism and spiritualism, and third, it defines Pearl Buck's humanism and her vision as a novelist very clearly" (Deshpande, 1999: 96).

Deshpande's observation cited above clarifies that the principal theme of *Pavilion of Women* is "spiritual pursuit" as it is 'totally devoted to mysticism and spiritualism.' However, the problem of the man-woman relationship and the plight of women are also the themes of this novel, and these themes, though subsidiary, are quite important. Buck's effort to explore the possibility of personal relationships among human beings in this novel is quite absorbing. Thus, her major concern in the present novel is human relationships and humanism. She has always upheld the spirit of humanism. Therefore, Yu Yuh-Chao says: "To be united to God, she maintained, all one has to do is to do right and to be good. Therefore, she rejected professional religionists; she valued only unlabeled faith in goodness" (Chao, 1981: 120). This "faith in goodness" and her rejection of "professional religionists" further make her step out of Christianity to compare it with other major religions of the world. As she says:

I too love the quite church before the service begins, but do not care so much for it when the sermon comes on. It is very difficult sometimes to sit and listen to what is said. But I like the best the quite of Buddhist temples where only the gods stand and the priests do not speak (Harris, 1972, 253-54).

Thus, her rejection of "professional religionists" and "faith in goodness" becomes the novel's central theme. This central theme is developed through the story of Madame Wu. Significantly enough, this also helps Buck to form her vision of spirituality. At the surface level, the novel is a story of Madame Wu. Madame Wu is a woman from a prestigious Chinese family. She has reached her fortieth birthday and come to a momentous decision. She no longer wishes to have a physical relationship with her husband but instead decides to retire from married life and select a concubine for her husband. Her surprising decision upsets her extended household. Madame Wu retires from wifehood "to pursue her own happiness" (307). Thus, from the beginning to the end, the novel is a story of Madame Wu's spiritual pursuit.

A comprehensive review of the novel reveals that, basically, Buck deals with four significant themes in this novel. The four major themes, namely – the man-woman relationship, orthodox religion, humanism, and the spiritual quest, are developed simultaneously in the novel.

The theme of the man-woman relationship occupies a considerable portion of the novel - the relationships between Madame Wu and her husband, Mr. Wu and C'hiuming (the concubine to Mr. Wu); Linyi and Fengmo (Madame Wu's son), Mr. Wu and Jasmine (a flower girl/prostitute), Tesmo and Rulan, Mr. Kang and Madam Kang. It is significant to note that though marriage is the sanctioning authority for a man-woman relationship, Pearl Buck has crossed such traditional boundaries and concepts, for she believes only in the genuine love between man and woman. Therefore, the relationship between Mr. Wu and Jasmine, completely outside the orthodox marriage, is depicted to be full of genuine love and harmony. Interestingly, Mr. Wu is not as happy with the concubine as with Jasmine. He is slightly shocked when Madame Wu decides to separate herself from him when she becomes forty. Against such a background, the relationship between Madame Wu and Andre reaches the zenith of spiritual love. The theme of the man-woman relationship in Buck's *Pavilion of Women* can be a separate independent subject of investigation.

The second major theme of the novel is the conception of the orthodox religion. The two major religions discussed in the novel are Confucianism and Christianity. Pearl Buck's view of religion is revealed in the dialogue between Madame Wu and the foreign priest Brother Andre:

"You are trying to persuade me to let you teach him your religion", she said shrewdly.

"You do not know what my religion is," Brother Andre answered.

"I do know", she said.

"Little sister Hsia has read me often out of your sacred books, and she has explained me your foreign ways of praying and all such things."

"My religion is not hers, nor hers mine", this strange man replied.

"Explain me yours," she commanded him (158).

Here, we find the priest Andre stepping outside the orthodox Christian religion. His concept of a true religion resembles the oriental concept of spirituality. For Brother Andre, God is in "bread and water" and the air and humankind.

It is very significant to note that Madame Wu also gradually learns how to cross the orthodox boundaries of her own Buddhism. It is clearly revealed when Madame Wu's mother-in-law dies. The priests are called for exorcising evil from the house. She follows these old ways for the sake of family but does not believe in these things. In this context, Pearl S. Buck says, "In her innermost heart Madame Wu did not believe in those priests nor in their gods" (147).

There are a number of examples, the situations, dialogues, and incidents revealing Buck's pre-occupation with humanism. It is enough to say that Pearl Buck's humanism is the extended sympathy toward all human beings - it is the extension of the Christian love, which is revealed again in the dialogue between Madame Wu and the priest. The priest is on the deathbed, counting his last. She asks the priest at such a painful moment: "I am here" she said, "Tell me what I must do."

For a long moment, he could not speak. He was dying. She could see the emptiness at the bottom of his dark eyes, and when she saw, he would gather there in the light. His lips parted, his breast rose in a great breath as he gazed at her. "Feed my lambs," he said distinctly. Then she saw death come (216). Here "Lambs" mean the orphan children the priest brought up out of compassion and humanity. She tells the children: "Now that your father has gone, I am your mother [- - -] All are my children" (235). This humanism is far deeper than what it appears to be at the surface level. It is not merely out of the moral and ethical codes of conduct that she accepts the responsibility. However, she accepts the responsibility of the orphan children because she means it herself. This humanism has spiritual intimations.

Thus, though the man-woman relationship, religion, and humanism are significant themes that provide the novel a sense of thematic richness, the most significant theme of the novel is indeed a theme of spiritual quest, and it is represented by the character of Madame Wu in the novel.

The entire novel (along with certain other things) is nothing else than the gradual development of the character of Madame Wu from a woman expert in household management to a soul that becomes one with the universal spirit. This remarkable transformation of Madame Wu takes place in the novel only because of the other guardian of the novel – the foreign priest Brother Andre, whose spiritual development is already complete.

Brother Andre enters the Wu house as a tutor to Fengo, Madame Wu's third son. In the first encounter with Brother Andre, it becomes clear why she is treading the path of spirituality as she says to him: "I am entirely happy except that I feel the need of knowledge of some sort. What sort I do not know myself" (119-20). It is not the knowledge she aspires for, which she already knows. It is a higher kind of knowledge. It is her spiritual quest to enlighten herself. It is her aspiration and longing for spiritual freedom. Thus, *Pavilion of Women* depicts the gradual journey of Madame Wu from the elemental realities to the "eternal life" (329).

Brother Andre indicates to Madame Wu through his spiritual gospel of love (irrespective of religion, caste, or creed) the spiritual experience she is subjected to. Madame Wu finds in Brother Andre the joy of selfless love. Unlike Madame Wu, Brother Andre has channelized his energies towards the world around him, not intending to control or manipulate them but to spiritualize and establish a brotherhood. He believes that successful relationships are built by respecting others and paying proper attention to the people around them. Brother Andre is the spiritual person who provides the best example of a noble human being, moral to the highest degree and "divine" to the core. He is the friend of all, a well-wisher, and a benefactor of the whole world. He pursues his "Way of religion" for the welfare of humankind. He senses the presence of God in that which is around him and believes that "He is in the air and the water, in life and death, in mankind" (160). So, he finds and feeds the lost children taking them under his roof, and sits by those who are ill. For him, the Divine is the indwelling spirit of all creatures. To an appreciable extent, spirituality can be seen to have a unique aim – the promotion of human values and the welfare of

humankind in general. In this sense, Brother Andre is a genuinely spiritual person. His divine humanity consists in his unbounded love for all and his concern for those in distress.

In fact, through his deeds, he points to the fact that the “Way of Love” is an approach to the Divine. In fact, Brother Andre’s “Way of religion” illustrates Pearl Buck’s idea of religion, which is inclusive and human. It defines her humanist convictions. Brother Andre’s idea of religion steps him toward saintliness. His faith and belief in divine humanity impress Madame Wu greatly. Brother Andre leaves the Wu house, and Madame Wu sits gazing into the handful of stars above her court. Brother Andre’s “idea” inspires the potential seeker and awakens the ‘sleeping’ *Kundalini* in her, and she is instantly thrown into a trance. Her servants, sons and even Mr. Wu come to see her. They all call her out loudly, but she hears no voice. She continues to look at the stars for a very long time. Pearl Buck describes this trance in the following way:

Nothing in her life had been as sweet as those moments of whole freedom when her soul had left her body behind. She knew that this freedom could become drink to the soul, [- - -] for while her soul had been wandering among the stars, she had neglected all else, and the burdens of this great house had dropped from her. She had cast them off and left them behind her as surely as a nun escapes the travail of womanhood, as surely as a priest escapes the burden of manhood (164).

Brother Andre tempts her to the realm of such freedom. This freedom of Madame Wu, which she experiences in her trance, is something mystic, transcendental or spiritual in nature; and it leads her to establish a sort of spiritual communion with the spirit of Brother Andre. It is this spiritual freedom that is central and crucial in the novel.

Brother Andre comes to be a well wide and deep, a well of learning and knowledge for her. One afternoon she asks Brother Andre to take her as his pupil. Brother Andre is a “bad omen” for others in Wu’s house, as his entry into the house has brought a disorder. Despite her troubles in the house Madame Wu comes to some exquisite secret bloom in the presence of Brother Andre. She feels sorrowful at the shortness of life. Brother Andre blames her for treating her husband with contempt and buying a young woman as one would buy a pound of pork. He finds her guilty of three sins and says:

“You have despised your husband, you have held in contempt a sister woman, and you have considered yourself unique and above all women. These sins have disturbed your house. Without knowing why, your sons have been restless and their wives unhappy and in spite of your plans no one is happy. What has been your purpose, Madam?”

“Only to be free,” she faltered. “I thought, if I did my duty to everyone, I could be free.”

“What do you mean by freedom?” he inquired.

“Very little,” she said humbly. “Simply to be mistress of my own person and my own time.”

“You ask a great deal for yourself,” he replied. “You ask everything [...] forget your own self.”

“But all these years”, She urged, “I have so carefully fulfilled my duty.”

“Always with the thought of your own freedom in your mind.”

“Direct me” she said at last.

“Instead of your own freedom, think how you can free others, [...] from yourself” he said gently. (208-09)

Madame Wu learns that freedom is not a matter of arrangement; Brother Andre pushes her to the higher values of life. He wants her to be selfless, prideless. Still, the self is strong as she considers herself “unique and above all women.” Such a person cannot get closer to his happiness. Thus, Brother Andre leads her to follow the spiritual path further.

Andre advises her to get rid of herself and think only of others. To Madame Wu, to “think only of others” means to yield and the unconscious pride in her is not ready to yield to others. Madame Wu thinks this talk of Brother Andre religious and inquires doubtfully:

“Is our Heaven your God, and is your God our Heaven?” She inquired.

“They are one and the same, [- - -] There is only one true God. He has many names” he replies.

“And if I do not believe in any” she inquires willfully.

“God is patient,” he said “God waits” (214).

Brother Andre believes in the oneness of God, and his belief helps Madame Wu clear her religious doubt. She felt a strange warm current pass through him and her, but it did not begin in him, and it did not end in her. They seem only to transmit it from the ends of the earth to the ends of the earth. This attitude of Brother Andre toward God makes Madam Wu remark, “The seas no longer divide the people and heaven is no more our canopy” (215).

While returning from Madame Wu’s house, Brother Andre tries to save the moneylender from the robbers. They beat him over the head, and his skull is cracked. Madame Wu, having heard the news rushes to his house. He dies immediately after asking her to feed the orphan children he has collected under his roof. However, her experience of Andre’s death is very significant as it gives her added spiritual strength. Being alone with his dead body in the room, she feels her whole being changed. Her whole frame grows light and strong. She feels free and whole. She feels Brother Andre’s spirit alive in her own heart and experiences a kind of spiritual peace. She then tells his dead body, “Andre [- - -] you live in me. I will do my utmost to preserve your life” (219). Pearl Buck comments on the experience of her spiritual peace:



The moment she had said these words peace welled up in her being. It was so profound, so quieting, so contenting, that for the first time in her life she knew that never before had she known what peace was. Standing motionless in the bare room before his shell, she felt happy. (219).

This experience proves to be of great significance to Madam Wu, for it changes her whole personality. Energy begins to work in her mind and her body. The change is expressed in her remark, "Of course I am changed. [...] The springs of my being are different. I shall no longer live out of duty but out of love" (244). It is her discovery of herself through love, and she feels the strange enrichment flowing through her whole being, followed by "serene content." She feels happy because she and Andre have spared great misery and can keep their great joy. At this moment, she declares her love for Andre. It gives her a sense of complete comfort and cheerfulness. She is warmed and strengthened by it, making certain of herself. Love permeates her brain as well as her body. For her, Andre is not dead, he is living, and he is with her because,

She loved him. The reticence of the body was gone. It was unnecessary. She who all her life had been skeptic to the bone, who had smiled at priests and temples mummy, [...] to whom the spirits of nature were only childish imaginations, she was now sure that Andre was alive and with her (227).

New wisdom occurs to her, which alone she has never had. She reflects on her stupidity of selfishly trying to free herself from the men and women in her house by withdrawing herself. She reflects, "Food and clothing she had provided, discipline and order she had maintained, and yet the whole house was in a turmoil, and nobody was happy. She had been angry with them because they were not happy" (228). All this she now finds completely foolish, as she has not been able to tell them how to be happy.

The concubine, Ch'iuming, fails to add happiness to Mr. Wu's life, and he starts visiting the flower house. There he falls in love with a young girl Jasmine. One day Jasmine comes to Wu's house, intending to stay there permanently. Madame Wu is ready to offer her free rice and shelter if Jasmine has come for it. Then Madame Wu is marveled at herself. Had this happened a month ago, she would have despised the girl, but now after the spiritual experience at Andre's house, she is changed totally and ready to offer the girl free food and shelter.

If Jasmine really loves Mr. Wu, she feels that love, too, must be allowed. After that mystic experience, we find that she asks Brother Andre, now alive in her own soul, whenever she has a question to ask. Thus, the dialogue is between her and a voice answering from within her own body. The dialogue becomes a monologue. One of the significant illustrations of it is as follows:

"Andre", she said to herself, "it is strange, is it not, that you had to die before I knew you?"

“Not strange,” the answering thought came into her mind.  
 “There was my big body between us [...] I was held in their (his parents) flesh. Now I am wholly myself.”  
 “Andre,” she said to him within her, “should I still call you brother, perhaps?”  
 “It is no longer necessary to qualify our relationship.” So, he answered in her heart (232).

This mystic communion between living Madame Wu and dead Brother Andre is clearly spiritual. Simply within her brain, she hears Andre’s voice answering her questions. Now she realizes:

...for the first time in her life she disliked no one. All her life she had struggled against her dislike of human beings. None had been wholly of her taste. Thus, her mother she had disliked because of her ignorance and superstitions. Her father [...] because his heart was far away [...] And though Mr. Wu had been a handsome [...] there were secrets of his person which she disliked. [...] Old Gentleman [...] his heart was good, his intelligence clear, but his teeth were broken and his breath came foul (234).

However, now for the first time in her life, she dislikes no one. It is no doubt that Andre has changed her whole personality; she accepts the orphan children saying, “I am your mother [...] All are my children” (235). The servants and the children are surprised to see “this new Madame Wu” (236). It is Brother Andre who has awakened love in Madame Wu. However, it is strange that what Andre does to Madame Wu with his spiritual strength, Jasmine does the same with her true love for Mr. Wu. In this regard, the whole episode of the flower girl, the young prostitute, Jasmine, is significant in the novel. Pearl Buck’s remark in this regard is significant:

It was not a wonder that a man like Andre should have wakened love in her. But that this Jasmine, this common, rosy little street girl, this creature of ignorance and earthly innocence, should have roused in Mr. Wu something of the same energy was a miracle. [...] She understood this miracle in him that was love, whether it came through a great man or through a girl from a brothel. Priest or prostitute the miracle was the same. (244-45).

Love is the force that transforms and improves men. This miracle has reached her, hidden in her secret courts, and it has reached him in a flower house and has changed them both. Then one day, Madame Wu goes to Madame Kang’s house, hearing the news, “The child refuses to be born” (245) and saves her life. She stays there for two days at Madame Kang’s bedside and returns with blood on her satin garment. Ying, her maidservant, draws her attention towards it, and Madame Wu, who was so fastidious, now only murmurs, “I forgot myself” (253). Love and humanity make a man forget himself. Thus unconsciously, she does what Andre had asked her to do.

Madame Wu does not fully understand the change that has taken place in her being. However, she feels that she is walking along a path of light. Buck comments on this situation: “And the light that lit this path was her love for Andre. Did she need to know what step must next be taken; she had only to think of him and then she knew” (253). Thus, her love for Andre leads her to know the next step of her life. So, when Ying brings Ch’iuming’s little girl, she feels no burden and no perplexity, which earlier she had felt. She thinks, “She must deal with both mother and child as Andre would have her do” (253). Thus, Madame Wu follows the way of love suggested by Andre. She does not doubt that the ‘Way of Love’ is an approach to the Divine. She learns that Ch’iuming does not love her child as she does not love its father. Further, when she learns that it is Fengmo, her third son, whom Ch’iuming loves, Madame Wu is not angry. Instead, she feels pity for Ch’iuming, and so she decides to keep Ch’iuming in the house and asks her to help her care for the orphans. She is spiritually transformed, so she does not reject life or the world. Thus while handling the case of Ch’iuming, she only remembers Andre and decides to keep her at home instead of driving her away.

One day, sitting in the library, Madame Wu asks Brother Andre, “why did you remove yourself from the stream of life?” (258). Brother Andre’s answer to the question is nothing but his views on physical love, marriage, and worldly things. He is to marry a woman he loves, but he sees “a light” that turns him away from love and marriage. He experiences an epiphany, and he explains it to Madame Wu as follows:

When I was like other men, [...] I thought myself loved by a woman. But God gave me a sight into human beings too quick for my own happiness. I saw her like Eve, planning for other human beings whom she was to create – with some small help from me [- -] And I saw my small part, so brief a satisfaction of the flesh, and all my life then spent in digging and delving, like Adam, in order that our garden might be bigger and the fruits richer. So, I asked myself if it was I she loved, and the answer was, perhaps – but only for the moment, because she needed to be served. So, I said to myself, ‘Shall I not rather serve God, who asks nothing of me except that I do justly and walk humbly before him?’ On that day I became a priest (258).

Thus, like Madame Wu, Brother Andre, the Italian priest, has already stepped out of manhood. He is beyond the physical and material wants. It has been significantly illustrated in his reply to Madame Wu’s hesitation in visiting his house to see the radio. He says, “Do not be disturbed. There is nothing to disturb you. The man in me is dead. God killed him” (195). It shows that both of them are out of the demands of their flesh. It is necessary to qualify them in their endeavor toward spiritual happiness.

Madame Wu finds that Rulan and Linyi, wives of Tesmo and Fengmo, respectively, are not in right relation to the house and, therefore, to the universe. She finds them unhappy in their conjugal life and applies the lesson of “Love” to them. She says, “Love each other [...] Life is too short for such love. Love one another and

do not waste one hour in anger. Divide your love from your passion and let there be no confusion between the two" (267). Thus, she brings them on the right path. She remembers the words of Andre, "Be tender to the young" (274), and feels an immeasurable longing to make these two happy in her house. With the coming of Jasmine into the Wu house, Mr. Wu is returned to his old self. In this way, he is happy, Madame Wu's purpose is fulfilled, and she feels happy. She feels happy about her wisdom in bringing Jasmine under the roof.

Though Madame Wu and Brother Andre have stepped out of all orthodox ritualistic religions and set religious institutions of religious dogmas, they believe in certain humanist convictions, which are called "religious." Their humanist convictions can be seen in the following dialogues: "You believe in God. I believe in Justice," she had declared. "You strangle toward one and I toward the other." "They are the same," he had declared (275). It defines Pearl Buck's humanism and her vision as a novelist.

Tesmo returns from his foreign trip and lives at his house for ten days very happily with Rulan and again goes on a tour. His plane is crashed, and he dies. Rulan, his wife, is happy that at least they have lived happily for ten days, and those memories are enough for her to lead her further life. After some days, Fengmo also returns to the house unexpectedly, as he has planned to be away for five years. One day, he goes to a laundry worker to fetch his clothes. The laundryman is illiterate and cannot read the letters that come to him from his home. Fengmo used to read and write his letters for him, and then he remembered that in his village, too, his own people could not read and write. So, he packs up his bag and returns to his village, remembering the words of Brother Andre: "To know how to read is to light a lamp in mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe" (303).

He wants to 'devote' himself to starting a school for the children of the farmers. Thus, he proves himself to be a faithful student of Andre. It is significant to note here that Ch'iuming and Rulan, too, have the same intention. They, too, wish "to make a school for the children of the farmers" (301). Fengmo is happy with their prospect and thinks they and his wife, Linyi, shall help him in his work. Madame Wu sees "his (Fengmo's) thin young face light with something of the light that had burned eternally in Andre's eyes" (303) and gives them her permission as Andre has directed her to "instead of your own freedom, think how you can free others" (209), "Think only of others (213)." Thus, Madame Wu gives Freedom to Ch'iuming, Rulan, and Fengmo, and becomes happy. Fengmo, Andre's student, carries forward the work of his teacher. Meanwhile, Ch'iuming's mother comes to the village searching for her cast-away child, where Fengmo has started school, and Ch'iuming goes with her mother. Thus, Madame Wu is relieved of the burden of Ch'iuming. Meanwhile, Madame Wu becomes famous for her patient listening and cool judgments, and "many come to her for enlightenment" (325). Now it is she who decides all great matters in city and country. Madame Wu and Fengmo learn from Andre that "the right of the self to be" (325). Andre, who is called "heretic" (328) by his own people in Italy, actually changes the whole personality of Madame Wu, who "All her life [...] had struggled

against her dislike of human beings" (234), and fills her heart full of love for every earthy creature. Because of this love, "she had opened, her gates and he had come in, and with him he had brought to her eternal life" (329). Now she believes that her soul will go on when her body dies. Like Hesse's Siddhartha, Madame Wu learns that death is just another part of life. It is the greatest realization on her part, and thus she reaches the highest enlightenment. Love alone makes her believe so. The novel ends with this same triumph of love. Buck's comments about Madame Wu at the end of the novel are really noteworthy:

Gods she did not worship, and faith she had none, but love she had and forever.  
Love alone had awakened her sleeping soul and had made it deathless. She knew she was immortal (329).

Thus, *Pavilion of Women* is full of insightful and surprisingly spiritual novels. The novel also instructs us that we need to channel our energies towards the world around us (like that of Andre and Madame Wu), not to control or manipulate them but to spiritualize society and establish a brotherhood. It makes us believe that humanism is the only moral alternative to the evils and odds of modern civilization. Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women* does not contain a wealth of symbols and images. The most significant symbol is the artist's "picture" set on Madame Wu's bedroom wall. In the picture thoughtfully, the space is blank, and a human figure is shown to be climbing a mountain. The symbolic significance of the picture is clearly revealed in the dialogue between Madame Wu and her mother-in-law, the old Lady:

"Are you changing everything in these rooms? She (the old Lady) asked."  
"I shall change nothing," Madame Wu said, "except that I have brought in that painting from my old room. I was always fond of it." [...]  
Old Lady rose and went to the scroll and stood before it, leaning on her staff. "Is that a man or woman climbing the mountain?" she asked.  
"I don't know," Madame Wu said. "It does not matter perhaps."  
"Lonely!" Old Lady muttered. "Lonely in the midst of all those mountains! I have always hated mountains."  
"I suppose the person wouldn't be there if he minded loneliness". Madame Wu said (42).

Twenty-four years ago, Madame Wu had brought this picture. From the mystical point of view, this is highly symbolic. It symbolizes her yearning for higher life values, the seeds of which were already there in her mind years before. She had long made up her mind that she would retire from her duties as a female on her fortieth birthday. In Madame Wu's case, it is true that "... things exist in their essence even before they are materially realized and named" (Desai, 1995: IX). Her comment, "I was always fond of it," reflects her spiritual quest. It raises her to a level of higher consciousness.

The above dialogue points out two contrastive attitudes of the Old Lady and Madame Wu. The Old Lady is materialistic, so she hates loneliness and mountains. The 'mountain' is used to symbolize the zenith of spiritual height. Spiritualism and materialism are two contrasting attitudes toward human life. Madame Wu's attitude represents the spiritual one. To reach the zenith of spiritual height, the soul must pass for its purification before it attains "illumination," followed by its union with the Divine.

Pearl S. Buck represents the different stages of Madame Wu's spiritual development by using symbolic incidents and events. Her stepping out of her femalehood is also symbolic in this sense. It indicates her entry into *Vanprastha Asharam*. The first two stages of her life – *Brahmacharya Asharam* and *Grahasthya Asharam* are already complete. Now she is the one crossing the "Ocean of Sansara" and initiation into the spiritual world. Unconsciously, she is on her way to comprehend and realize *Brahman*, i.e., the ultimate Reality. From the Vedanta Standpoint, one has to be given up attachment to 'names' and 'forms' before realizing the ultimate Reality. Madame Wu initiates into the spiritual world by announcing her detachment to married life. Now, she is beyond the limits of any orthodox institutional religion, therefore, free to seek spiritual happiness without any restraints of religious orthodoxy. Thus, she seeks freedom from institutionalism, the essential precondition for any seeker.

Her decision brings her a new feeling of lightness. Now, her body is given back "with new freedom" (36). She wants to spend the rest of her life "assembling her own mind and her own soul" (48). In her pursuit of freedom, Madame Wu passes from her egoistic identity through a series of failures, loses it, and attains the ideal spiritual identity in selfless service, i.e., *nishkamkarma*. In her attempts to make the members of her household happy, she encounters many failures. For example, she brings the concubine to make her husband happy, but the concubine fails to add any happiness to Mr. Wu's life. He starts visiting the flower house; Fengo's marriage with Linyi proves to be a great failure. Her second son, Tesmo, is not happy with his wife Rulan; the concubine tries to end her life. Pearl S. Buck comments on this situation: "Food and clothing she had provided, discipline and order she had maintained, and yet the whole house was in a turmoil and nobody was happy. She had been angry with them because they were not happy" (228). All this now she finds completely foolish, as she has not been able to tell them how to be happy. At this crucial point of turmoil, Brother Andre enters her house as a tutor to Fengo. Along with Fengo, Madame Wu also becomes Andre's student. Brother Andre transforms her completely. He brings about her redemption. The dynamic and inspiring teachings of the *Bhagvat Gita*, *Upanishadic Vedanta*, and *Buddhism* believe that faith in or surrender to an incarnation or a prophet will bring about one's redemption. Madame Wu surrenders to Brother Andre, and her faith in him brings about her redemption.

Brother Andre knows the mundane world and the blissful experience of spiritual fulfillment. He has surrendered his ego and has undertaken the selfless service of humankind. In her pursuit of peace and enlightenment (a higher sort of knowledge),

Madame Wu becomes the spiritual disciple of Brother Andre and, at previous experiences, the bliss of *Paramananda*. In this context, her experience of Andre's death is very significant as it gives her added spiritual peace. For the first time in her life, she realizes the meaning of peace and becomes happy. It changes her whole personality spiritually, and this change is expressed in her remark: "of course, I am changed. [...]. The springs of my being are different. I shall no longer live out of duty but out of love" (244).

At this moment, she declares her love for Andre. Obviously enough, her love for Andre is a spiritual one. As a student to Andre, Madame Wu is in the process of learning to drown her ego. Madame Wu is so obsessed with her pursuit that she simply does not care for them would be gossiping about her relations with Andre. In her pursuit of *Jnana* (enlightenment), Madame Wu undertakes the work of Brother Andre. She provides shelter and food to Brother Andre's foundlings. Thus, in Madame Wu, one finds the three well-known approaches: Reality *Karma*, *Bhakti* (her faith in Andre's doctrine), and *Jnana*. These ways of approaching reality are the essence of the *Geeta*, which is characteristically a theistic Hindu scripture. Further, we find the message of Vedanta Hinduism in Brother Andre's advice to Madame Wu, who says, "instead of your own freedom, think how you can free others" (209), or further, he says, "Think only of others" (213). Thus, Brother Andre makes Madame Wu have the spiritual experience of selfless service to humankind. Through his spiritual gospel of love (irrespective of any religion, caste, and creed), he also indicates the spiritual experience to which Madame Wu is subjected.

Madame Wu becomes famous for her patient listening and her calm judgments over time, and "many come to her for enlightenment" (325). Thus, he guides Madame Wu, his disciple, towards enlightenment. He brings her to "eternal life" (329) and makes her feel "immortal" (329).

It is interesting to note here that Madame Wu attains the "miraculous spiritual power" after the death of Brother Andre. Thus, Brother Andre is but the "spiritual leader" who guides his disciple towards enlightenment. Once he has instilled in Madame Wu the feeling of 'love for all earthy creatures,' his work is over. Thus, he puts Madame Wu on the proper path leading her to her eternity. According to the Oriental philosophy, the Guru is the one, who shows the path of *Moksha* (here the freedom) to the disciple, but the *Moksha* is to be achieved by trial and error. After the death of Andre, it is her love for Andre that provides her spiritual enlightenment, and she attains *Moksha* here in this world. Thus, Madame Wu attains spiritual identity by becoming a spiritual disciple of Brother Andre and passing through the third and fourth stages of *Vanprastha* and *Sannysa*. In the last phase of her life, she allows the 'freedom' to Rulan, Fengo, Ch'iuming, and the like. She is attached to nothing, so it is a stage denoting her life of renunciation, i.e., *Sannyasa*. She attains *Samadhi* by doing selfless service (*nishkamkarma*) to people and attains salvation here in this world. Thus, in *Pavilion of Women*, Pearl Buck gives poetic expression to Oriental philosophy. Buck's attempt to define her perception of spirituality is really noteworthy. Buck was brought up in China under the influence of Buddhism and

Confucianism. These two faiths, along with Christianity, help her much to form her vision of life. Her preoccupations with Buddhism and Confucianism and her perceptions of Christianity (being a daughter of a Christian missionary in China) are presented systematically in *Pavilion of Women*. In the novel, she synthesizes eastern and western spiritual traditions. In the novel, she has followed a definite method and definite discipline by which she has conveyed her perception of spirituality. Like Hesse, Buck seems to convey here that salvation can be achieved by those who discard the physical attainments of the material world and enter into the world of universal love. Thus, *Pavilion of Women* is an artistic embodiment of Buck's affirmative vision of life. In the novel, she expresses a positive philosophy of life that controls and affects the thematic aspects.

For Buck, spirituality promotes human values and the welfare of humankind in general. In this sense, Brother Andre and Madame Wu are truly spiritual persons. She has presented her perception of spirituality through the characters of Brother Andre and Madame Wu. For her, spirituality also consists of unbounded love for all and concern for those in distress. Buck says, "To be united to God, [...] all one has to do is to do right and to be good" (Chao, 1981: 120). This statement reflects her perception in terms of spiritual quest. In the novel, Buck conveys to us that love is the force that transforms and improves men. Buck makes us believe that humanism is the only moral alternative to the evils and odds of modern civilization. She seems to instruct us to utilize our energies towards the world around us to spiritualize society and establish a brotherhood. Like Hesse, Buck also believes that an affirmation of transcendental principles like Truth and Beauty through a delineation of pursuit and practice of higher values like love, compassion, etc., naturally paves the way for attaining the highest joy. Through the characters of Brother Andre and Madame Wu, she conveys that the 'way of spiritual love' is an approach to the Divine. Her spiritual perception reveals that although Heaven and Nirvana are slightly different notions, the notion of reaching perfection through love and selfless service is common to all major faiths of the world.

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