

Exploring into the Realm of Multi-Dimensional Facets of Communication in
Aubrey Menen's *The Stumbling Stone*

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Abstract

Aubrey Menen in his famous novel, 'The Stumbling Stone', (1949) criticizes the false religious beliefs that exist in the societies of London. The novel is the narration of misadventures which occurred to a saint named Colley Burton who was evicted from the Indian subcontinent despite his efforts of doing well to the people and living a blameless life. He then returns to London wherein he witnesses that his life in India has been sensationalized and has made him look like a celebrity. As Burton displeases with such a life, a streetwise playwright named Prynne and his lead actor named Van Bilitier attempt to tempt Burton with his works on charity and urge him to support and rehabilitate 'Chaz Hopkins who is a juvenile offender. Burton identifies the fact that his newly attained status is indeed a way for the privileged and the rich to make the profit out of the misery of other people and opts out from the attempts made by Prynne and Bilitier. Menen has lucidly written the novel with deep concerns regarding the puncturing of the European societies provided with the opposition to the gains achieved through war and empire.

Key Words: Communication, Aubrey Menen, The Stumbling Stone

Introduction

The novel, '*The Stumbling Stone*', attempts to depict the false religious pieties of the London societies, to make more explicit and comprehensible for the common reader, Aubrey Menen combines satire pictured at many instances in this narrative. At the beginning of the chapter, Menen describes Colley Burton as a benevolent man who "had lived a blameless life among the heathen, doing them all manner of good works" (The Stumbling Stone, P:1). Menen opens his cannon in support of Burton and describes the devil's influence on the Indian Maharajah that forced Burton to leave India against his will after the independence in 1947. The Maharajah's decision backed Burton because he has sincerely laboured to

serve the Indian people to make their life blissful over the past twenty-five years. However, his righteousness and selflessness don't prove him successful but a mere stumbling man. Menen illustrates this fact that "It was true that Burton was a saint, in all respects save one. He had never been tempted by the Devil. He had never been tempted by the Devil... It was then that he discovered that the Devil is always up to new tricks." (The Stumbling Stone, P:1). The devil's influence on Maharajah proves that India's independence has nothing to do with the good deeds that Burton has been doing during last twenty-five years for the people who he cared wholeheartedly.

After the independence of India, Colley Burton too moves to London. In

concurrency with Burton's arrival in London, Menen sets before us a new chain of events reflecting various colours of English society. Lucky Prynne, a screenwriter, and Van Billiter, a leading actor set a trap of temptation before Burton because they desire to maximize their profit from the play entitled *The Story of Colley Burton* written by Prynne on Burton's life. In the play, *The Story of Colley Burton*, Van Billiter plays a role of Burton and thus, he doesn't want any predicament to be created by Burton, therefore, he intends to convince Burton how the play is beneficial for him. Menen briefly describes Burton's love story which is stimulating subject the play written in his life. Lucky Prynne had acquired a manuscript about Burton's life written by his former beloved, Angela.

At this juncture in the novel, when Lucky Prynne and Van Billiter are engaged in conversation, Billiter says *"that every word in the play was written and is acted in good faith. I shall say that we had no other intention but the celebration of a great man's good deeds for the uplift of playgoers."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:27). Menen, by exhibiting the hypocrisy of Van Billiter, satires on very nature of the business minded people. At the surface level, Billiter appears to be a symbol of charity and therefore, is using Burton's biography for the betterment of the people. However, the reality is different because Billiter's deeds purely emerge from the notion of business and thus, they intend to deceive Burton. Exposing such money-minded tendency of Billiter in particular, Menen slaps on the face of English society in general.

As the plot of the novel moves on, Lucky Prynne discloses that he had acquired a manuscript of Burton's life written by his former beloved, Angela and has *"used her story and now Colley Burton has become the symbol to thousands of English men and women of the love of one's fellow-men that rises above the passions of the flesh."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:32). The presumption of English men and women of love about Burton's love explicitly suggests that the unsuccessful, broken and elapsed love affairs help uplift the lovers above the passions of the flesh. This vertical growth of love affairs implicitly stirs us to compare Burton's love with the lovers depicted in the Metaphysical Poetry which inclines towards the spirituality.

Menen exposes the moneymaking attitude of Prynne when he endeavours to manage the church to proclaim Burton as a saint. Because according to the spiritually, the saint is considered as a representative of Christ and is recognized to be the holy person and increasingly allowing his/her daily acts to more closely match with the acts of Christ. However, Prynne violates this biblical significance while referring Burton as a saint. *"I think," said Prynne slowly, "the best thing for us to do is to tell Colley Burton that as a result of our play he is already a saint."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:33). Prynne, with this tempting statement about Burton's being a saint, emerges as a representative of the devil and arranges a trap to tempt Burton for the personal gain. Thus, Menen, exposing the insincerity and selfish nature of Prynne, slaps upon the hollowness of Christianity and its followers in general. Menen illustrates Burton as a sufferer and is considered as a symbol of

failure because he, despite his benevolent work for the heathens in India, is abandoned and compelled to leave India. On the other hand, after Burton's arrival in London among his own people, he is being tempted by the play for the acquisitive gain.

As the satire is everywhere pervaded in the novel, Menen renders the various elements of society involved in a different situation. When Burton, after a meeting with Gresham, reaches to watch the gala performance on his life from a stage-box, he realizes that the play is neither projecting him in a positive way or nor it is meant for any charitable work; therefore, he believed that *"the play must close, and his name be separated from the works of Gresham."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:73). Burton has realized that Gresham is a man who is living upon the misfortunes of other people and Menen supports this selfishness as he mentions different professional persons such as jailers, bailiffs, doctors, and so on who under the name of charity loot the unfortunate people and Burton himself is now being victimized by the play on his life.

Menen satirically projects Burton being trapped by his own people which he had left twenty-five years ago. When Burton reaches the theatre, *"he found himself face to face with a woman, naked save for a cincture and breastplates, and forty feet high."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:76); Menen illustrates that woman as an object of temptation employed to tempt Burton by the people that Burton considers civilized but appear to be tempting and *"considering that Colley was a saint."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:76). This act of temptation has an implied reference to the Bible, wherein temptation usually takes the form of a test or trial designed by God

which aims to give a person the opportunity to do evil and commit a sin. Sometimes the point is to confuse the subject about what good and evil really are. Other times it's to simply see if the person really understands what good and evil are in the first place. God may do the tempting, or Satan may be given this task. Likewise, here Burton is also being tested by God.

Burton, in order to redemption from the temptation, says, *"Go, whore of Babylon!"* (The Stumbling Stone, P:76). Babylon is guilty of committing *Fornication* and therefore, is a *Whore*. Here, it must be noted that fornication, according to Bible, is the act of committing adultery against God by mixing with other Pagan nations and practices i.e. traditions and going after other gods. Look at how God described this in the book of Ezekiel speaking to His people *"You have also committed Fornication with the Egyptians your neighbours, great of flesh; and have increased your Whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. You have played the Whore also with the Assyrians because you were unsatiable; yes, you have played the Harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing you does all these things, the work of an imperious Whorish Woman; In that you buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and have not been as a harlot, in that you scornest hire; But as a wife that committeth Adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband."* (Ezekiel 16:26-32). Thus, Menen, referring the name of Babylon, blames the English society for forgetting the principles of Jesus Christ for the sake fiscal augment. The plot of the novel moves on and Burton comes

across the lady whom he has already called a whore. When he met her face to face, "*he had no defence. Neither had he had a very extensive romantic vocabulary.*"(The Stumbling Stone, P:81). However, Colley Burton blushing asks her to have lunch with him and also came to know her name was Penelope Hopkins. Menen, with this Burton's fondness about the girl, Penelope Hopkins, heralds that he has been successfully tempted by Prynne and Billiter.

Meanwhile, Menen severely comments on the tendency of the English society about the beauty of women and the measurement of their body. Menen maintains that "*It was found that most men agreed on certain salient points. The first was that an aristocratic woman was tall. The second was that all kindly girls inclined to fat. The third was that all girls who live in the lap of luxury and frequent the most expensive restaurants look slightly underfed. The fourth was that all women with brains have no breasts, while the fifth was that all women who swim are quite to the contrary.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:86-87). Menen, with the detailed elaboration of various aspects of women's beauty, wish to articulate words about women authenticating that women are beautiful creatures created by God and to be adored by Man. As Menen, mentions '*aristocratic tall woman*', '*fat woman*', '*underfed one*', '*with no breast*' and '*quite contrary*' reminds contemporary women i.e. women artists and lovely business women, women of everyday and of Celestial curvatures, women in our communities and cities, women in our state and nation, women of our world. The women in the daily walks of life glowing in their business, giggling and struggling,

working hard, and some partying harder shows another side of woman which Menen, implicitly shows the negligence on the part of men and stirs us to take good care of our women, as they can be our purpose to exert our max or to follow our dreams. Menen suggests that for men, women can be quite nuts and different. They can be quite neurotic and emotional. But for us, men, tend to be less emotional, less detailed, some a bit crass. But the understanding women a bit more, maybe even to sympathize with their deep feels, and also find them interesting in the way they are, the way they act. Not just sexually they are gold when they are nice. Women must be treated with respect and good manners, with patience and comprehension, and knowing that they go through a process.

Menen further attacks on the attitude of the contemporary society towards women by exposing it through the example of Penelope's advertising role in selling tractors. It is evidential in the statement: "*But farmers are shrewd men,*" said Colley. "*Why should a picture of a girl make them buy a tractor?*"(The Stumbling Stone, P:93). This is a scathing irony on average across magazines, one of two advertisements that feature women portrayed them as sex objects. The sexual victimization of women uses to be only in pornography; however, it has now found expression not only in films and television shows but in advertising as well. The exposure of Penelope's beautiful legs exposes men's mentality which allows appearing women as purely decorative objects in commercial advertising. Menen strongly objects to use women to sell products crossing all the existing ethical boundaries. He does not approve women's

sex to influence the product that the farmers purchase. Women are moving their way up in society. Women have earned advanced degrees and have infiltrated careers traditionally dominated by men, because of this society has demanded that women become servants to popular images of beauty and sexuality. There is the criticism against women's increasing power in society that may serve as an explanation for the sexualization of women in advertisements.

Menen implicitly argues that there is a substantial amount of hostility toward women in all cultures of the world. This is because the women have elevated their position within society's power hierarchy. Increasing the possibilities of equality for women have been met with oppositional reactions intended to maintain men's dominance. The widespread of media images of highly sexualized women is hypothesized to maintain men's dominance by designating women's bodies as property that can be evaluated, looked at, and touched at the impulse of men's desire.

Menen does not spare anyone while exposing the follies and hypocrisies of society; he slaps on the pitiless facet of English and Indian people. It is evidential in Burton and Penelope's following casual conversation:

"Nobody likes us," said Colley. "Why?"

"You're just not used to living in a city," said Penny.

"Does everybody who lives in a city dislike everybody else?" Colley asked.

"Oh no," said Penny. "If you were knocked down by that motor-car, everybody would be very kind." (The Stumbling Stone, P:103).

Through Burton and Penelope's piece of conversation, Menen implicitly hammers on the pretentious nature of the people living in the cities. It shows that the manners of people in a city are dissimilar from that of the people in a village. People in a city are unfriendly, and they retain distance from others. On the contrary, the people in villages are warm-hearted and friendly. Villagers receive you well whereas city-dwellers tend to be within doors. People in villages are very helpful in nature, but people living in cities tend to be more selfish in their attitude. Although Menen explicitly praises the city people for their benevolent actions in the difficult situation like the accident or some natural calamities, he slaps them for their selfishness.

Along with the progress of the plot of the novel, Menen strikes on the household problems like beating wives, drinking wine, poverty, moral corruption, and so on. Out of all these problems, poverty is the most fundamental reason that creates disastrous environments in the houses and detaches the members of the family from one another. To maintain a good atmosphere in the family, the general deprivation of poverty has to be eradicated and that requires an understanding of underlying existing financial situation and some type of collective response from the family members. However, such collective efforts are hardly made and as a result, the unhealthy practices resume in the society along with its horrible results. It is evidential in Penelope's statement: *"All people like that believe that people in the Lower Income Groups beat their wives."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:120). Menen focuses on the household problems with respect to the

violence of men against their intimate partners i.e. wives under the impact of intoxicating originated from the low-income issues. Menen blatantly exposes that it is presumed social and cultural practice of the male often engage in verbal or physical abuse against their other half. Nonetheless, it shows that men appear more knowledgeable; whereas women appear engaged in a culture of silence and unwilling to express their needs and desires out of fear.

In chapter six, when Burton is on the visit to Penelope's house, Menen vividly describes the life of middle-class people living with an utmost scarcity of facilities. Penelope opens the door and asks Burton to wait in the hall to see if everything is all right. The dearth of essential things, as Menen puts forth from Burton's perceptive, as: "*Colley stepped into the hall to see how she had contrived to do it. It was a very small hall. Anybody fatter than he, Colley judged, would have to move the hat stand put on the front doorstep of trying to make an entrance.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:128). With this example of Penelope's house and hall, Menen exhibits the life of middle-class living with minimum facilities in the cities of England. He comments on the government for the lack of understanding of the vital need of urbanization which is challenged by different necessities of the urban life. It also shows that the process of urbanization is far from homogenous across regions and swathes of territory that are wholly different in terms of economy and political structures. In the country like England, there are cities that are really urban or metropolitan regions in terms of population sizes and territorial extent which are in need of the basic

requirements. Menen aptly supports this perception as: "*From the street, it seemed they lived in houses: from inside, flats.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:129).

Menen exhibits the paucity of the urban life positively through Penelope's remark: "*The stairs are awful, aren't they?*" said Penny. "*But Mum says that that's how I got my legs well developed, running up and down them when I was a kid.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:129). It stirs us to think that the cities have become centers where vast numbers of people compete for the most basic elements of life i.e. for a house within reach of employment with an affordable rent or price, or vacant land on which a shelter can be erected without fear of eviction; for places in schools; for medical treatment for health problems or injuries, or a bed in a hospital; for access to clean drinking water; for a place on a bus or train; and for a corner on a pavement or square to sell some goods quite apart from the enormous competition for jobs. In the majority of cases, governments have the power and resources to increase the supply and reduce the cost of many of these things. The Hopkins, being poor, live with minimum facilities but Burton senses that "*It was indeed, thought Colley, a living room, full of a warm and pleasant life of its own, despite its poverty and smallness. It had a stove with the small barred square through which one could see the fire; the rest of the stove was taken with lids and nobs, one of which shone white with polishing. There were three or four chairs, all different, drawn up around it, and a box with a cushion on it.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:130). Burton's perception about Penelope's household things exhibits the struggle of middle-class people. Menen points out that

Lack of affordable low-cost housing and poor planning makes the people's life miserable. He also slaps on the insufficient financial resources and lack of coordination in government bureaucracy which are two main causes of poor housing planning.

The elements of satire are highlighted when Burton meets Charles and comes to know about his depression and its causes. Burton, in order to bring him out his state of depression, convinces and encourages him with his own real-life examples: *"I was sick the same way. With London, with my family, with myself. I'd wanted to be a clergyman. Don't ask me why again. I don't know. I wanted to be something loving and good and holy, I suppose. I had an idea that's what we were supposed to be. Well, it had gone wrong. I'd failed an examination and made myself a fool. But it opened my eyes. I'd failed to take the degree, I'd worked hard. I was soaked in goodness....."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:153). Menen does not merely project the failure of Burton in particular but the failure of many young aspirants of Burton's age in general. Burton's failure in becoming a clergyman by failing to get a degree shows that the young aspirants like Burton were not properly guided and just were running after their own dreams aimlessly without much preparation. This example forces us to think that such aimless competition builds nothing but only anxiety and depression which isolates young generation from the mainstream and consequently the modern youths get caught into the trap of the competitive world and yield like Charles.

As the conversation of Burton continues with Charles, Burton comments on the various religions of the world and expresses

implicitly his views on a human tendency of moulding religion for the sake of the personal gain. Menen exposes through Burton's speech on the essential qualities of becoming a clergyman as: *"I saw what sort of clergyman they wanted. He must be good, but not shake their belief that no man can be really good. He must forgive his enemies, but not theirs. He must be charitable, but not with other people's money. He must be meek, especially when they gave him a piece of their mind. He must fear God but listen to the churchwardens. He must encourage them with hopes of Heaven, but explain away their fears of Hell."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:154). Here, through Burton's speech, Menen indirectly points out that the churches, despite its primary duty to foster universal brotherhood in all of us, teach the clergymen to be selfish. The churchwardens want to create the clergymen who will be obliged to follow them and will act to please them. The churchwardens don't want any reformation in the existing belief, whether they are good or bad. Menen comments on the expectation of the churches. The churchwardens want charitable and meek clergymen so that there won't be any threat to the existing conventional practices. Therefore, they put in force their intentions through the clergymen and pretend to inculcate the thought of *'serving others is serving ourselves'*.

During the conversation with Charles, Burton talks about the various aspects of Greek culture. Charles too responds him as per the knowledge acquired through Mrs Lemass' narration. The conversation reveals that Charles wants to visit the Rome city and that is his ultimate dream, however, he didn't have money, therefore, Burton promises to

offer him money. It is strange to comprehend that Burton too didn't have enough money to offer Charles; however, he decides to agree with Gresham for the sake of money.

Burton's thought of helping Charles by offering him the expenditure of the tour to Rome allows the Devil to tempt him. It is evidential in Burton's monologue which is an expression of Burton's inner self. *"Then, Mr Burton, let me say that this morning I saw you as a saintly man of God come among us to reform us by your silent example. But now, now that you tell me of this great fight that is going to wage..."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:174). The inner expression of Burton about his failure in maintaining his saintly image demonstrates that Burton is empowered by the temptation arranged by Prynne and Billiter as it is evidential in Billiter's speech *"I shall tempt him with doing good."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:47). Though Burton, being displeased about the play on his life, has punched Gresham and has already decided to detach himself from Gresham, Prynne, and Billiter by rejecting their money and sainthood. However, now forgets his resolution and decides to get along with Gresham, Prynne, and Billiter for the sake of money to send Charles to Rome. Menen describes Burton's downfall before the temptation as: *"Colley, with Prynne's hand on his arm leading him gently out of the path of entering actors, remembered that, beyond the proceeds of the play, he had not a penny in the world with which to send Chas on his journey to Rome."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:175). Menen ironically presents the mute and meek behaviour of Burton to convey that the money can turn a

good man into a bad one and a bad man into a good one. Here, it is seen that Burton, despite will, is allowing to continue the play on his life which falsely represents him.

Menen describes a helpless situation of Burton through the ironical delineation of Prynne. It is observed in Prynne's long speech where he mocks on Burton's sainthood and Charles's grand tour to Rome. He says, *"Do not ask me why. I do not pretend to understand the whims of saints. And do not marvel at it."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:178). Then he goes on to narrate the helpless situation of Burton against the trap of temptation put before him deliberately in the form of Charles. He further supports his argument that Burton hereafter won't revolt against the play on his life through the play represents his falsely. As Prynne says, *"My dear Van, if you could have seen his face when I told him that I was taking the playoff, you, like me, would have felt that words, at the best were the crude vehicle for deeper human emotions."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:179). This sarcastic remark upon Burton's state exhibits the merciless passions of the professional world. Here, the readers feel sympathy about Burton's degraded situation because he had decided to close the play in his life, however, now, out of the need of the money, he wishes to keep on it in any condition. Prynne's another satirical remark comes when he says to Billiter, *"If I'd tried to persuade Burton to get his money by hitting the advance booking-clerk over the head and snatching the cash-box, he would have had endless moral scruples. Instead, as it is, he swallows his principles and his self-respect, gives his name to the nightly performance of what he knows to be a*

thumping great lie." (The Stumbling Stone, P:180). Prynne's statement authenticates the decline of Burton because he is ready to sacrifice his principles which he preserved throughout his life while living among the heathen for the sake money that he utterly needs to send Charles to Rome. Burton knows that the play that *"he watched it from the wings, was even more false than the photographs had led him to suppose."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:181). However, he agrees with them because this time he doesn't want to be a failure. Menen comments that *"This time there must be no failure. He had failed among the outcasts: he had failed again here, for he had let himself become the instrument of scoundrels and falsifiers of the truth. But he would, at least, do one good act in his life. He would send Chas away."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:181-82). Here, Burton doesn't want to end his life as an unsuccessful one but a successful one because success is one of the key aspects of the life for which the society adores. Here, Menen projects true meaning of success that goes far beyond the common definitions of success, such as having a lot of money, being wealthy, having a lot of tangibles and earned degrees. Quite the opposite the true success in life cannot be measured with the above-named factors, but instead with a number of people that are able to live a better and more advanced life because of what you created. This is the meaning of success. Society lets us often conclude that living a successful life means to be extraordinarily wealthy and have a lot of tangibles. But the meaning of success is to live a happy life and to make this world a better place for everyone and that is the ultimate aim of Burton behind his subjugation of his principles. Burton's

subjugation is apparent when he seems to be bargaining for the money with Prynne.

"Burton," he said, holding out his hand, "ten percent. And we'll call it a deal."

"Twenty-five per cent.," said Colley, adding with the slightest of grins, "seeing that we're just a couple of white men among teeming savages."(The Stumbling Stone, P:189). The conversation proves that Burton has lost his premeditated path for the sake of money to help Charles. It reminds the example of human weakness described in biblical scripture wherein David temporarily loses his purpose, as here Burton loses now, and that leads him to adultery with Bathsheba and eventually murder of her husband. Thus, Menen wants to show us that wealth is a human weakness if we let it control us and it seems overpowering Burton.

Menen, further through the discussion happened between Charles and his sister, Penelope, brings out the various aspects of modernity regarding the men-women relations from the perspective of Christianity. Charles asks Penelope, *"What'll your boyfriend say when he hears you've been to a midnight party with Mr Burton, and come home at three in the morning? Singing hymns," he added maliciously.* (The Stumbling Stone, P:194). Charles' *maliciously* asked question has an implicit meaning because of Charles, being her brother, intends to suggest Penelope be careful about many-women relations. In Christianity, though there isn't any objectionable statement in the New Testament against the relations between bachelor man and woman. However, in the Old Testament, there are restrictions on virginity and marriage. There are bits and

pieces in the New Testament that seems to reinforce it, but it could be argued by many Christians like Charles that that's the wrong explanation, a poor paraphrase, or it doesn't apply anymore, and not a mandate. Christ himself was pretty much silent on the subject. It's pretty clear, however, that the scriptural prohibition against *girlfriends and boyfriends* does not exist. Of course, any individual Christian may read the text that way and live by their interpretation. It is not welcomed to pressurize others into it, making people feel ashamed of their own natural sexuality, *feeding it to children* and so on is nothing but poisoning the society with degrading behaviour.

Thus, keeping this religious dogma in the mind, Charles indirectly suggests his sister, Penelope forget her ex-boyfriend and to think about Burton and make him propose her. This thought is discernible in Charles' sudden tone reflecting the urgency, "*Look, Penny, ... "You make Mr Burton ask you to marry him. He's a fine man. He wants me to go to Rome. He wants to give me the money and a passport."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:201). Menen, through Charles' concern and suggestion, rendered over the problems of modernity and how the people yield before the poverty. It makes us think that how the people forget the age while marrying with someone else. Here, it must be noted that Burton is a middle-aged man in his fifties, however, Penelope is beautiful and a young girl barely in her twenties. There is a lot of distance between Penelope and Burton's age. However, Menen points out that how the society exploits such beautiful girls and how professional like Prynne and Billiter use to fulfil their malicious purposes.

As per the request of Burton, Penelope calls a taxi through her younger brother, Leslie and leaves to attend the party held at Van Billiter's Mayfair building. As soon as Penelope leaves in the taxi, Leslie notes down the address where his sister has gone. Meanwhile, Charles decides to quit his life be consuming the sleeping pills because he feels that his tour to Rome won't cure him and consequently he won't be happy. Therefore, he makes a decision to write two letters the first to Colley Burton; and the second a note to Mrs Lemass. Despite prolong attempts he couldn't write a letter to Colley Burton. Finally, he changes his mind and decides to write a note to Mrs Lemass first. Menen describes the internal tumult of Charles' heartfelt while writing a note to Lemass because she, despite utter poverty has incessantly been saving money to send Chas to Rome. This instance brings out the miserable picture of the middle-class people and projects nakedly breaking down and washing out their dreams. Menen describes "*That day she had put several pounds into Chas's hands, asking him to lay them in the box himself. Rome, then, had seemed very near.*

But when they had asked they had been told that it was still not enough. Mrs Lemass had sighed and gone about the business of saving again. But each year there seemed less and less that she could save, each year it seemed that Chas's visit would cost more and more."(The Stumbling Stone, P:211). Menen comments on the existing financial system of England which is totally unfavourable for the middle-class people like Mrs Lemass because their sincere and unflinching efforts too can't fulfil the ordinary dreams like a visit to Rome. Menen also

slaps on the continuous hike of inflation which brings common people into trouble and consequently discouraging them forces to commit suicide as now Charles wish to end his life due to the gloomy situation.

Menen pathetically describes the depressed stipulation of Charles as he travels to meet his sister, Penelope for the last time before ending his life by consuming pills. *"It was safe, and he laughed. It was strange that he should still be hiding in front of the seat of buses when he had a bottle like that in his pocket. Tomorrow he would not have to be afraid of anybody."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:213). Menen endeavours to bring out the vital problems of youths, like Charles, who have a reputation for being fragile, less flexible and more overwhelmed than the expectations. The society is so pernicious towards such youths and sometimes they call them spoiled or coddled one. Charles too is one of the sufferers of such type and is branded as a spoiled one and now he too believes that there won't be any progress in his state of mind and consequently determines to end his life. Menen wants us to have a closer look towards such cases which looks more heartbreaking portrait of young people who are suffering endlessly from anxiety and depression that is a result of the Second World War and it had pervaded several years to restore the stability. This dogma affects all classes like suburban, urban and rural; those who are college bound and those who aren't. Family financial stress can exacerbate these issues and takes youths at high risk as now Charles is.

Menen makes us more sympathetic about the uncertain fate of Charles who has now prepared to end his life and free himself

from the financial anxiety and his social notorious reputation. Menen presents Charles and Burton paradoxically because Burton is striving hard to help Charles and on the other hand, Charles wants to end his life. This paradoxical phenomenon is seen in Burton's speech when he asks Denys, the politician, *"Indeed? Please don't think me interfering. The boy is merely a patient of mine. A long-standing patient—I may say, almost a celebrated patient. I have no claim on him save inasmuch as I am legally responsible for his sanity. I have no wish to disturb your plans, but there are such things as passports. And there are such things as medical advisors, who occasionally have a professional conscience."* (The Stumbling Stone, P:226-27). This extract unveils philanthropic nature of Burton who, despite his personal loss and defame through the play of his life, sincerely urges to help Charles to go to Rome. Menen uprisings Burton through his benevolent act slaps on the greedy and merciless aspects of the society. However, Menen exposes how such a philanthropic man is being endangered by the counterfeit people. It is evidential when Burton sincerely says that *"I am a simple backwoodsman who has been only twenty-four hours in civilization and believe that only way you can make a person happy is by helping him to do what he wants to do."*(The Stumbling Stone, P:241). Menen, through Burton's noble presumption of the duties towards humanity, mocks severely on the ugly aspects of the civilized English society which is incessantly engaged in scheming.

Towards the conclusion of the novel, Menen presents a height of satire; he exhibits the follies of the modern man through Burton's

a passage stream of consciousness: *“the city which lies sleeping outside of those windows would no longer be a city of peace and human kindness, it would be a City of Destruction, with the strong and merciless destroying the weak, defenceless poor.”* (The Stumbling Stone, P:244). Menen, here, decrees that the world is merciless and is too much attached to the personal passion; it doesn't care about poor and weak people; it is running away from the holy path of salvation, like, a character, Christian, at the initial level, was misguided by the worldly wise-men in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and was wandering in wilderness. Likewise, Burton who is a stumbling stone like John Bunyan's Christian efforts timelessly like the Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* and powerfully expresses the truth and believes that the present life is a spiritual journey towards the ultimate salvation. The followers like Christian and Burton believe that Jesus Christ will liberate them from their sin. We too see that the path of Burton's life is riddled with many trials, dangers, and obstacles. Yet, the journey to the Celestial City is also laden with displays of God's grace and faithfulness, therefore, Burton, despite his constant failure among Indian heathen, seems to be more meek and benevolent. Thus, Burton's journey from failure to failure reminds us a journey of Christian which begins in *Pilgrim's Progress* from the City of Destruction, similarly, Burton's journey to begin now. While shaking the beliefs of Christianity, Menen exposes Christian missionaries too who presume that they go in obedience to God's call. It is true that God called the apostle Paul, *“to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear*

to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts: 26:16-18). Jesus assured us that missionaries will face surrender and suffering. Missionaries leave friends behind, experience culture shock and rejection (Matthew: 10:16-31). However, Menen exposes that instead of delighting in serving God, the missionaries tend to torture people as follows: *“They also were sure that they were doing Christian work. But then they came out of their monasteries on horseback, brandishing a sword. They burned and they hanged and they tortured those that disagreed with them.”* (The Stumbling Stone, P:244-45). Thus, with such plenty of instances, Menen slaps on the counterfeit practices of missionaries in this and many of his novels.

The shocking element of satire comes when Charles consumes the whole bottle of sleeping-tablets to end his life at Denys house and goes to watch the entertaining programme at the theatre, Tanganyika. His condition constantly gets decorated, however, nobody looks at him and even Denys too leaves him to die. But Menen doesn't let Charles die; he takes him to Lemass' house and survives his life to show a victory of good people like Burton over the awful intentions of the worldly gluttonous people like Bitter, Prynne, and Gresham.

Menen ridiculous on the present scenario of the modern world that how it is incapable and immatured to solve the issues of the

young generation. He also mocks that how immaturely, people like Burton too, attempts to solve the problems but he realizes that he has worsened it as "*Colley was wrestling with a puzzle of his own actions.*" (The Stumbling Stone, P:303). It incident makes Burton identify his new role suspiciously and his blunder stirs him to bring change to the current goodwill that is the reformation of a Charles who is a victim of circumstances, and finds that in taking him off the pin of observation and granting his secret wish i.e. a tour to Rome, he has done Charles as much harm as the others done.

Conclusion

It is observed that according to reader's opinion Menen's *The Stumbling Stone* succeeds in exposing the politicians, artists, social workers, religious fanatics and their self-interest in doing good shown to the spectator. Menen presents Colley Burton, as

a stumbling stone who has selflessly worked hard and has also served to the Indian heathens when he was in India for more than twenty-five years. However, despite his great work, he has been forced to leave India and so that he arrives in England and for his surprise, he finds himself as a 'saint' and the play written about him by Pryne. Unaccustomed to recognition, he views his new role suspiciously, explores on his own, the focus of current goodwill, the reformation of a boy who is a victim of circumstances, and finds that in taking him off the pin of observation and granting his secret wish, he, Colley Burton has done Charlie as much harm as the others. So he takes his own way out, and the story ends, leaving the reader with an odd sense of exposed nerves, unsolved problems, and laughter still on the edge of tears. An odd book, not easily described.

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