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**CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TRAGEDY; ITS
COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN SHAKESPEARE
AND THOMAS HARDY**

BY

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FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

To
My Family
With gratitude and admiration.

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I feel pleasure to express my gratitude to Dr. Robert Cooper and Dr. Paul Innes whose regular assistance and intellectual guidance at large provided me an opportunity to achieve my goal, on time. Similarly, my cordial thanks are also due to Dr. Robert Hamilton, who proved to offer a helping hand in problems, during my stay at the university. My sincere thanks are also due to Mrs Avril MacGregor, an International Students Adviser, at Glasgow University, who provided considerable care and guidance, whenever, I approached her, in pursuit of this degree course.

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SUMMARY

The topic of the dissertation has been defined through chapters starting with an introduction to the characteristics of tragedy i.e. imitation, Catharsis, plot, the concept of tragic Hero, chorus, the three unities, the function of humour, significance of Fate, Chance and Diction, and the impact of tragedy on Society. In addition, the pleasures of tragedy signifying Catharsis and the role of tragic hero in it have been explained in succeeding chapters. After this, the tragic outlook of Shakespeare has been stated especially with reference to 'Hamlet', and 'Macbeth' where his views and philosophy on the subject are mentioned citing examples from these plays. Modern criticism based on tragedy has also briefly been described.

Thomas Hardy has been taken up for comparison with Shakespeare with reference to his tragic novels 'Tess Of The D'Urbervilles', 'The Mayor Of Casterbridge' and 'Jude The Obscure'. The views of Hardy about tragedy, his presentation of characters, his constitution of plots, his diction, his views about life style and so on have all been described in the chapters assigned to him.

Finally, in order to compare both writers, the main points have been considered for the agenda. Mainly, their views about Protagonists in their creative pieces of tragic art, their universal approach, their use of Catharsis, their construction of sub-plots, their concept of poetic justice, their imagery and diction, their tragic vision and so on have been examined with reference to their masterpieces.

However, this study does not consider certain recent critical theories mentioned in the dissertation but it is limited to consideration of the theory of Aristotle.

In order to conclude this paper, their final estimation is given under the heading 'conclusion'. The bibliography is given at the extreme end of the dissertation while

Chapters with their headings have been mentioned at the beginning in the table of contents.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO TRAGEDY

There is no satisfactory explanation of the process by which a Greek word meaning 'Goat Song' came to be applied to the poetic dramas of ancient Greece, in which the kings and heroes of Greek mythology were displayed in the crisis of confrontation with their gods. The mature Greek tragedy of 5th century B.C. Athens was analysed in Aristotle's influential poetics¹, and the greater exactness of his neo-classical interpreters particularly in Renaissance France established the responsibility of tragedy to deal with the fall of a great man (or exceptionally, a great woman). By an accident of Scholarship, it was the Roman poet Seneca (c. 4BC-AD65), rather than the greater Greek writers Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, who influenced the form of earliest English tragedies.

Tragedy is one of the dramatic forms which are basically related to the mood and orientation of the playwright. The dramatist attempts, within its scope, to show man in communication with the universe. To narrate this point with more stress one can say that a dramatist in fact deviates from the cause of comedy, which shows man in relation to society. Moreover, tragedy differs from the serious play which deals with man in relation to economic and similar powers. In the mind of the creator of tragedy an intention to show an active sense of good and evil is essential, an appreciation of spiritual values with relation to mankind in the world. Hamlet's following remarks provide the basis to understand tragedy.

"What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in

¹ Noted from the book by Lucas FL 'Tragedy serious Drama in relation to Aristotle's Poetics'. All subsequent references to Aristotle are based upon this edition.

apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?"² (Act II.2)

This speech of Hamlet provides the exact significance to the aspect. According to him, mere disaster and death do not represent tragic expression. It does not simply emerge from the conflict of man and economic forces. Neither is it the product of grand style, grandeur of language and skill in construction. In fact, in tragedy, man is seen alone with God; the power of fate hangs overhead, yet the human being is subject to immeasurably inscrutable force.

It is that major form of drama, which deals with the serious aspect of life and presents man moving blindly towards an unhappy end. We can also state that it is just opposite to comedy. There is no doubt that in tragedy, the emotions are more profoundly stirred. Because of this quality, it is more universal in its appeal and therefore must be regarded as the highest aspect of dramatic art. The expression of ideas in tragedy are often very profound, touching and deeply serious and can never be light, as in comedy. They are of various types, ranging from physical fights to the death or the troubles which one faces in pursuit of aspirations. Perhaps the most tragic conflict of all is the losing battle of good in man against the evil that ultimately wins. In tragedy, irony often abounds such as that which leads the unfortunate hero to do the wrong thing, which in his impression he believes that he is doing right.

Aristotle defined tragedy in a wider spectrum. According to him, tragedy is a representation of an action which is serious, complete and of a certain length. It is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted, not narrated and by exciting pity and fear it gives a healthy relief to such

² Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' edited by T.J.B. Spencer.

emotions. He defines, very logically at first, what tragedy is and what it represents. Secondly, the form it employs is clearly elaborated by him. Thirdly, he mentions the manner in which it is communicated and, lastly, the function it fulfils. In brief, tragedy handles serious actions of serious characters, while comedy deals lightly with the grotesque.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy has been focused upon by critics. If we remould the definition of Aristotle, it may seem thus: "Serious drama is a serious representation by speech and action of some phase of human life." However Aristotle's laws have been broken. The seriousness of tragedy has become mingled with comic relief. The idea of completeness, of beauty in language and metre, of the purgation of pity and fear - all these have been successfully challenged. According to Aristotle, "Tragedy is a representation of an action." What does action constitute? How much should there be? At present we come to realise, how surely and steadily during the centuries, the action of tragedy has passed from outside the characters to within them, from the boards to the theatre of the soul, so that at last the whole frontier between action and passion tends to fade away. Further tragedy represents "action which is complete in itself". What does this completeness constitute? There is a bone of contention between Classic and Romantic. Furthermore, verse drama has been replaced by prose drama. Although Aristotle's laws have been broken, nevertheless we can rightly say that their history is the history of tragedy. The following chapters will proceed in accordance with Aristotle's emphasis on the universal attributes of the form.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAGEDY

Imitation

This is one of the common characteristics of fine arts. It bears a great significance through which we examine tragedy. Imitation is treated in the wider sense as an aesthetic term. This phase has been used and interpreted by Aristotle. The objects of aesthetic imitation are human character, emotion and action. According to Aristotle, a work of art is a likeness or a reproduction of an original, and not a symbolic representation of it. A sign or symbol has no essential resemblance, no natural connection with the thing signified. Therefore, spoken words are symbols of mental states, written words are symbols of spoken words; the connection between them is conventional. This interpretation of imitation as an aesthetic term has a very limited scope and it is necessary to understand the real significance of this term. A work of art reproduces its original, not as it is in itself but it appears to the senses. Art addresses itself not to abstract reason, but to the sensibility and image-making faculty. It is concerned with outward appearances. Its world is not that which is revealed by pure thought.

Imitative art in its highest form is an expression of the universal element in human life. If we may expand Aristotle's idea, fine art eliminates that which is transient and particular, and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original. It discovers the form towards which every object tends, the result which nature strives to attain, but rarely or never can retain. The real and the ideal, from this point of view, are not opposites, as they are sometimes conceived to be. The fundamental thought of Aristotle's philosophy is 'becoming' not 'being'. Becoming to him meant not an appearing and vanishing away, but a process of development, an unfolding of what is

already in the germ an upward ascent ending in Being, which is the highest object of knowledge. The concrete individual thing is not a shadowy appearance but the primary reality.

The fundamental principles of fine art are derived by Aristotle from the idea of the beautiful. Thus Aristotle makes beauty a regulatory principle of art but he never says that the manifestation of the beautiful is the end of art. The objective laws of art are deduced not from an inquiry into the beautiful, but from an observation of art as it is and of the effects which it produces. These cardinal principles of aestheticism are applicable to the tragic art. Thus, following Aristotle, tragedy has universality. It deals with human characters outwardly and inwardly, since profound and deep emotions and actions go from outward to inward. Tragic art is a fine art that creates a sense of aestheticism. Thus, it is related to philosophy rather than history.

Scope of Tragedy

Tragedy is concerned with the broadest possible questions. A tragic artist will contemplate: what kind of world do we live in? How are we to judge man's life? Are man's values those of his world? Such preoccupations are basically metaphysical. If we suppose that metaphysics is useless, then tragedy can tell us nothing about the world. But in this scheme Sophocles and Shakespeare were reflecting upon the same underlying reality from similar points of view. Every artist makes his own statement about his own world. Within this context, tragedy is meaningful in at least three senses. It contains summary statements about life that obviously hold "a good deal of truth" and even wisdom. Secondly, they are made more significant by the dramatic action of which they are parts. Finally, the ideals that we find in great plays are true to the feelings of sensitive and reflective people whether or not these ideas are verifiable by empirical tests.

In the Greek dramatists, in Shakespeare, in Racine and in Ibsen, tragedy is a moving record of man's involvement in a world that is beautiful, painful and strange. The tragic dramatist sees that his characters can never be fully at home in this world although they are a part of it. In this world men are thrown upon critical dilemmas that are hard or impossible to escape. Life is lived at the peak of intensity. Enjoyment must come soon or never at all. Decisions must be made at once, and a strong light is cast upon he who undergoes trial. The tragic actor strongly wades through the tragic terrain. Consequently, we will find it difficult to paint the landscape without figures.³

The tragic world is not identical with the real. The tragic artist's views play an important role in creating the atmosphere of tragedy. In the Middle Ages, there was proper dramatic tragedy. But tragic narratives were popular. For example, Chaucer's Troilus after death looked down upon the earth from the blessed station on the eighth sphere.

Other tragic writers are fundamentally pessimistic. Euripides took a consistently unfavourable view of the human situation. Five of his plays end in a sort of coda which seems to imply the inability of mankind to plan significantly for the future.

However, the writer may avoid any explicit postulation of universal good or universal evil. A.C. Bradley found considerable evidence of a metaphysical world-structure in Shakespeare's tragedies under the influence of the dominant idealism of the 19th century.⁴ Shakespeare stands well behind his work. He has set down numerous pronouncements upon the state of the world. Many of these have passed into the English language:

- (i) life's but a walking shadow a poor player....
- (ii) we are such stuff

³ My argument here is based upon Soares, Anthony X in Introduction to the Study of English Literature Macmillan, 1930.

⁴ Bradley, A.C. Shakespearean Tragedy.

- As dreams are made on.....
(iii) Thou has nor youth nor age
But as it were, an after dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both.....

A playwright may find the world inscrutable and may wish to emphasise the mystery and awe surrounding the heroic adventure. In his mind, he may reason that since destiny is incomprehensible, it must therefore be evil for man if not in its essential nature. Most tragic writers reveal their worries and grief in the face of those questions that disturb all thoughtful men.

It is evident that the playwright is not primarily a thinker, although he is attempting to give an essentially correct account of the world. The merit of a playwright's tragedy is by no means solely dependent upon the correctness of his answer to the philosophical questions explained in his play. Thus, the playwright through his art makes the character seem admirable.

Although in this view tragedy is valuational and metaphysical in character, it dramatises man's involvement in a world which both playwright and hero have fully sensed but incompletely rationalised. Dramatic tragedy refers to tragedy in life, but it does not give impression that Being or Substance is tragic. The tragic dramatist is ever seeking to denominate his world. But he always returns to man. Tragedy has little use for universals bereft of instances. The loyalty of Antigone, Hamlet and Mrs Alving; the pride of Oedipus, Lear and Brand - on such "really real" universals rests the universality of tragedy.

Catharsis: The emotional Effect of Tragedy

Aristotle defined tragedy as the imitation of an action that is serious. For him it also has a magnitude complete in itself in the medium of poetic language and in the manner of dramatic rather than narrative presentation. Hence the incidents that arouse pity and fear, with which tragedy accomplishes its catharsis of such emotions. It has been much disputed precisely how to interpret Aristotle's catharsis or "purgation" of pity and fear, but two things seem clear. Aristotle, in the first place points to the undeniable, if extraordinary fact that many tragic representations of suffering and defeat leave an audience feeling not depressed, but relieved and almost elated. Secondly, Aristotle use this distinctive effect of the "tragic pleasure of pity and fear" as the basic way to distinguish tragic from comic and other forms, and as the aim which above all determines the selection, treatment and ordering of the component parts of a tragedy. For example, Aristotle says that the tragic hero will most effectively arouse pity and fear, if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil, but a man like any of us, though the tragic effect will be stronger if he is rather better than most of us. Such a man is shown as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of a mistaken act caused by his Hamartia - that is his "tragic flaw" or "tragic error in judgement." The tragic hero accordingly moves us to pity because the misfortune is greater than he has deserved, and to fear, because we recognise similar possibilities and consequences in our own fallible selves.

Plot of Tragedy

According to Aristotle, the plot of tragedy has three demonstrable characteristics:

- i) The plot of tragedy should be of a certain size.

- ii) It must be of a certain structure.
- iii) It should be the soul of a drama.

F.L. Lucas has further elaborated these points:⁵ tragedy is obviously limited because it must be on one hand be long enough for the catastrophe to occur, and on the other hand short enough to be grasped as a single artistic whole and not like a creature a thousand miles long. In practice, on the European stage this has meant a usual length of from two to three hours. This kind of drama has generally been less appreciated in the present times simply because it is too expensive. Artists or those who finance them are inevitably more cautious where there is a risk of wasting not merely a few sheets of paper but a whole troop of actors or tons of wood and stone. It is therefore only because of this that acting tragic drama has suffered. Discussing the plot of drama, Aristotle has further suggested that tragic plot should have a beginning, a middle and an end. A 'beginning' is a situation which has definite consequences, whereas the 'middle' is the situation with both causes and consequences. The 'end' is the result of the 'middle' but creates no further situation in its turn.

Every tragedy is divided into a number of Acts. Nowadays, there are three acts. Aristotle did not divide a play into acts, but into three parts pertaining to the 'beginning', 'middle' and an 'end' or, in his own language, into Prologue (the introductory speech), Episode (the intervening narrative), and Exode (the concluding speech). The Greek play, in fact, continued full representation from the beginning to the end. Thus, the stage was never empty. During the representation, the curtain was never allowed to fall. But modern practice has kept to the division of plays into acts and scenes. Therefore, there is always a pause at the end of each act.

⁵ Lucas, F.L. 'Tragedy serious drama in relation to Aristotle's 'Poetics'.

The opening scenes contain the exposition of the subject. In other words, we are introduced to the main characters, their stations in life, their viewpoints and interests. We know about their affairs at the time when the play opens and in this way, much of the story is conveyed to us to stir up our curiosity and to enable us understand the later parts of the play.

The next step is called the growth or development of the plot towards the climax. The different motives and interest of the leading characters become involved, then complicated development takes place. As the story progresses a little, the suspense and interest of the audience are aroused more and more until we reach a turning point, which is called the climax or crisis.

The final phase of the structure of tragedy is called the Catastrophe, that is in case of tragedy there is an unhappy ending and in the case of comedy, there is the union of the hero and heroine. It is essential that the catastrophe be very simple. It must depend upon few events and include few persons. It must be brought about by probable and natural means. Thus, in the development of the structure of tragedy, the five parts are greatly inter-related, hence (i) Exposition, (ii) the complication, (iii) the climax or crisis (tying the knot), (iv) denouement (or untying the knot), (v) catastrophe.

In a very real sense, the plot is the system of actions represented in a dramatic or narrative work. The characters who carry on the action and represent people are full of specific moral and dispositional qualities. As the tragic action unfolds, it speaks to the audience of a concept with which they are already familiar. The play puts forth the existence, the importance, the victories and defeats of human freedom. Freedom is the tragic theme. The tragic hero does not completely control his destiny. If he did, his play would not even faintly resemble reality. As in life, in tragedy the boundaries of freedom and compulsion are difficult, perhaps impossible to assign. What the theory of

tragedy requires is the recognition that freedom as well as compulsion underlies the dramatic action. In other words, tragedy requires the presence of a hero whose metaphysical being can act as a creative cause of critical decisions. Exactly, how he came to be the man he is, is rarely the chief concern of the dramatist. For this reason, the tragic hero seems freer than real men, and his achievements and errors appear to be genuinely his own.

CHAPTER THREE

REQUIREMENTS OF TRAGEDY

Tragic Hero

Aristotle says that in tragedy the characters must be on a grand scale. The hero should not be a common person and he must not be of bad character. If we don't find these attributes in him, we will find pleasure at his downfall in the play. He must be a man of considerable nobility of temper and yet with those human flaws and imperfections which so often prove man's ruin. By the exhibition of the natural disaster of the tragic hero, the audience has their feelings of 'pity' and 'terror' aroused. They feel pity at the downfall of such nobility and greatness and the woes, which such disaster brings upon even the undeserving. They feel terror at the awful consequences of our human shortcomings. For example, when we apply these considerations to some of the tragedies by William Shakespeare, we see that in Macbeth the hero is valiant, able and generous right from the beginning but it is his vaulting ambition which proves his undoing. Similarly, in Hamlet, his brain sickness and incapacity for prompt action is responsible for the hero's downfall. In Julius Caesar, the tragedy is of Brutus and his political short sightedness. In Othello, the hero suffers because of his passionate jealousy. Yet in all these cases, the hero wins our sympathies.

The chief character in a tragedy is called the protagonist or hero and if he is pitted against an important opponent, this character is called the antagonist. Hamlet is the protagonist and King Claudius the antagonist in Shakespeare's play, and the relation between them is one single conflict. In addition to the conflict between individuals, there may be the conflict of character against the circumstances intervening between him and a goal he has set himself, and the conflict of opposing tendencies within a single individual's mind. An example of this last type is the inner struggle between

Hamlet's desire to avenge his father and his propensity to delay. If any one of the characters sets up a scheme which depends for its success on the ignorance of the person or persons against whom it is directed, it is called an intrigue. A number of comedies, such as Ben Jonson's Volpone, and many Restoration plays have plots which are primarily concerned with the success or failure of one or more intrigues.

Chorus

A noteworthy element in Greek tragedies, the chorus consisted of a group of actors whose aim was to report what happened off the stage and to make some comments from time to time to stamp the desired effects. Sometimes, it was an integral part of the plot and sometimes only loosely related to it. In Greek tragical representations, the violent physical actions on the stage were reported by the chorus. The chorus was successfully used by Aeschylus. With the gradual addition to the drama of speaking actors, the importance of the Greek Chorus diminished until the tragedies of Euripides. The Roman dramatist Seneca retained the chorus to comment on the action of his characters.⁶

In the Elizabethan period, the chorus was reduced to a mere shadow of its original self. In the early English Tragedy Gorboduc by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, the chorus consists of actors who appear at the end of each act to comment dolefully on the moral. Ordinarily, in this period the Chorus was reduced to a single speaker, unrelated to the rest of the characters, who spoke the prologue or uttered occasional interpretations of the plot.

⁶ My contention is based upon Kitto, H.D.F. in Greek Tragedy, Methuen, London, 1939.

The Three Unities

Aristotle used this rule in his poetics, and they require that a drama should observe the Three Unities, i.e. Unity of Time, Unity of Action and Unit of Place.

Unity of time meant that the duration of the action or story of the drama was to be restricted to one day and no more. Unity of place required that the scene or locality in which the incidents of the drama are said to take place must not be changed and it must be the same throughout the play. Unity of Action meant that there should be only one single and complete plot. There could be interweaving of stories, but no subordinate incidents. The plot is said to be simple when a number of incidents are introduced into it and it may include a large number of persons and events, and yet not be deficient in unity of action, provided all the subsidiary incidents of the play contribute towards the main object of the play and are properly connected to it.

The Greek and Roman playwrights followed these rules and in England early attempts at regular drama were fashioned in accordance with these canons. But it was not long before the classical models were abandoned in England.

The function of humour in tragedy

The main departure from Aristotle's systematic approach to tragedy was the universal employment of humorous speeches and incidents called comic relief, in the course of serious action. Sometimes, the comic hits and dialogues were woven into the drama in such a way that they merely widened and enriched the tragic significance. We can refer certain instances to prove our point of view. The gravediggers in Hamlet, the drunken porter in Macbeth and the speeches of the Fool in King Lear are all lively examples. A non-Aristotelian form which produced artistic masterpieces was the tragicomedy. This is a play in which the action is basically serious and seems to

threaten disaster to the protagonist but ends in a happy reversal. The term "tragi-comedy" is also applied to plays in which serious and comic elements are combined throughout the action in the play. Examples of tragi-comedy are Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' and the 'Winter's Tale' and Fletcher's 'Philaster'.

Fate; Chance; Fortune; Necessity and Inevitability

(a) Fate

According to critics, the term 'fate' plays a very significant role in understanding the basic traits of tragedy. It provides a little link and meaning to understand Character and Action in the play.

Secondly, sometimes, fate can conveniently assume certain rationally comprehensible patterns. Therefore, it has a deep concern and sometimes even religious significance expands its meaningful image when we look at it with especial reference to human sufferings in the play.⁷

(b) Chance

Chance has no ethical significance. It is related to the word 'luck' ordinarily. The playwright may occasionally use another species of the wonderful. To a limited extent, he may invent incidents which are 'right' although they are in fact purely coincidental.

⁷ My idea is based upon, Lucas, F.L. in Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy, Cambridge 1922.

(c) Fortune/Luck

The doctrine of tragic flaw gives us an impression that Aristotle's leaning in this direction might be said that a tragic hero tends to encounter the kind of luck he merits. In Shakespeare, where the hero is unlucky, it is usually in Aristotle's sense.

(d) Necessity

The concept of necessity is difficult to distinguish from that of fate. For the Greeks, it was the main external force confronting man.

(e) Inevitability

The concept of inevitability has been interpreted in various ways:

- (a) Inevitability may imply that any other arrangement of events would be inartistic.
- (b) Inevitability may imply that character and situation being what they are, the catastrophe had to take place.

The first implication has to do with the form of tragedy while the second with its content, so far as this is separable from form. Naturally, these two implications are connected because the art of playwright ought to discover the logic inherent in the dialectic of action and character. If the play is to be 'right' it must exhibit the character naturally and aptly.

Diction of the Tragic Artist

The spoken words of the characters and their style of the delivery of dialogues are said to be the diction of the artist. Every playwright uses his own peculiar and

distinctive diction. According to critics the force of expression and beauty of oratorical numbers will serve to make a terrible action bearable, to raise a pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness. Moreover, the language of tragedy is itself beautiful. We may accept this position or not but it is a confirmed fact the imaginations of tragedy used in the play enormously enriches its aesthetic quality.

The language plays many roles in tragedy. In great writers, however, it has a manifold purpose. For it acts as the medium not only of Plot and Character but of Character-in-action; and in doing so, it communicates a great sense of human consciousness and purpose of ways in which these interact, and of their confrontation with the outside world.

In brief, tragedy attains the universality of great art by representing the human situation through words that audiences can almost imagine at their own.

Impact of Tragedy on Society

The individual moral consciousness has always held the centre of great tragic stage. But tragedy flourished best when playwright and audience could give full value to the individual, both as a person and as an effective social agent. In such periods, the tragic hero has been active both in the realm of his own mind and in the field of social relationship. The dramatic action has been meaningful on both levels, and the social meaning has been continuous with personal. When the dramatist has been unable to create a genuine conflict of both kinds, he has been unable to achieve a fully tragic effect. The cultures of ancient India, 17th century Spain and Soviet Russia were not appropriate to tragedy because they didn't permit the individual to function freely and fully.

It is believed that in Grece and Elizabethan England, men were recognised as individuals. Consequently, tragedy could symbolise the action of human beings who were manipulated by the social order. On the other hand, man could believe that his life and a vital relationship with the entire community of any given locality conceived as a living organism. But in the 19th century with the coming of the liberal trend in literature, the modern playwright rarely felt to be in a living union with a physical and spiritual community. Therefore, with lack of these feelings, dramatists wrote tragedies very different from those of Sophocles and Shakespeare, but not merely inferior to them.

Final Estimation

Tragedy solves the problems of life, just as a farce sums up follies. Coleridge⁸ is of the opinion that with Shakespeare tragedy was poetry in the deepest earnest and comedy was mirth in the highest zest. In other words, its subject is the struggle of good and evil in the world. A play is not a tragedy merely because it tells a tale of death or suffering. Its characteristic motive is the exhibition of man in unsuccessful conflict with circumstances. It must appeal to our emotions because it is based upon three varieties of life:

- (i) It deals with the fundamental dignity of man which is inborn in him and which is an asset for him.
- (ii) Protagonist possesses freedom of will and power to select his course of action in life. In every choice of action, he exhibits all the inborn nobility of his character.
- (iii) The final impression that tragedy leaves on audience's or reader's mind is that man, with all his moral spiritual forces, with all his initiative and free will, lives

⁸ Jonathan Bate ed: The Romantics on Shakespeare (Penguin Books, London 1997).

under a mysterious power which determines the trend and the final issue of his action.

Thus, tragedy places man with all his happiness and sorrow, in a context of moral order, which works out by chance or fate his ultimate destiny in life. We feel in tragedy the awe, fear, grandeur and magnificence of human life. Sometimes, man becomes an unwilling target of fate or dark destiny that leads him to an inevitable doom and destruction which he never deserves and that can be better described as a physical core of tragedy. On man's existence on earth, tragedy throws a light of grandeur and nobility, by placing man against the background of this everlasting and eternal problem of Evil yet his existence on earth is meaningful. It possesses a dignity and worth, though in his Struggle, he goes under and is forced to embrace his ultimate doom. The essential greatness of tragedy lies in the deep understanding power of sympathy and through deep insight into the roots of human life, the essential character of man's inner being.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLEASURES OF TRAGEDY

'Pleasure' and 'satisfaction' are two terms which have been more widely used in understanding tragedy than any other branch of literary art because they leave an emotional and everlasting effect upon the minds of readers or audience. Every critic very boldly admits the fact that Aristotle was the only philosopher who analysed and generated certain principles to understand tragedy and its greater effect that sometimes affects the sensitive minds. Aristotle emphasises mainly two things, Pity and Fear. In this context, he declared his mind and said that by pity and fear, we may effect the catharsis or purgation of emotion.

The fundamental difficulty arises with regard to the meaning of catharsis. Even his Poetics does not give direct aid in interpreting this complicated phrase, but the discussion has always been centred on this subject. Actually, the precise effect, and the passions on which tragedy works were variously interpreted. Although the critics Corneille and Racine have offered their own interpretations, both nevertheless have agreed in assuming the purely ethical intentions of the drama. Many other critics have translated catharsis in terms of purification, correction or refinement.

Critics have maintained that even Aristotle kept in view the pathological theory of the effect of tragedy when he used the phrase catharsis in the politics. Plato is of the opinion that Poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of starving them whereas Aristotle refuted the argument of Plato. He held that the regulated indulgence of the feelings serves to maintain the balance of nature. Tragedy is a vent for the particular emotions of pity and fear. In the first instance, it is true, its effect is not to tranquillise but to excite. It excites emotion, however, only to allay it. Pity and fear, artificially

starved, expel the latent pity and fear which we bring with us from real life or at least, such elements in them as are disquieting.

Musical Catharsis

Music's object is also Catharsis. It is a physical stimulus that provides an outlet for religious fervour. Patients who have been subjected to this process fall back into their normal state as if they had undergone a medical treatment. The emotional result is a harmless joy. Aristotle offered this theory of catharsis for consideration owing to the influence of certain religious melodies. These religious melodies are conducted to soothe the internal trouble in the mind. Plato was aware of the homeopathic treatment of diseased enthusiasm in man by means of music. Aristotle extended the principle to tragedy. He observed that all those who are liable to pity and fear, and, in general, persons of emotional temperament pass through a similar experience - they all undergo a catharsis of some kind and feel a pleasurable relief.

Significance of Catharsis

The phrase catharsis has a comprehensive meaning. Thus, the pathological effect on the soul conveys a limited impression of tragedy. Catharsis implies a much wider significance because it involves not only an emotional relief but a refining or clarifying of emotion. In fact tragedy does more than effect the homeopathic cure of certain passions. Its function on this view is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear, but to provide for them a distinctively aesthetic satisfaction, to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art.

Pity and fear are related things. According to Aristotle, fear is a species of pain or disturbance, arising from an impression of impending evil that is destructive or

painful in nature. Aristotle, further maintains that pity is a sort of pain at an evident evil of a destructive or painful kind in the case of somebody who does not deserve it, the evil being one which we might expect to happen to ourselves or to some of our friends, and this at a time when it is seen to be never at hand. In this connection, pity turns into fear where the object is so nearly related to us that the suffering seems to be our own. Thus pity and fear are strictly related feelings. We pity others whereas under like circumstances, we should fear for ourselves. Those who are incapable of fear are also incapable of pity.

Therefore, one of the purposes of tragedy is to make us fear for ourselves the distress we pity in others. Aristotle ties pity and fear too closely together. His doctrine rests on the fact that to be capable of pity, we must be capable of imagining, and therefore of experiencing in ourselves, pain or evil such as that we see affecting or threatening the person pitied. Its basis is a self regarding instinct; it springs from the feelings that a similar suffering may happen to ourselves. The Aristotelian idea is simply that we would fear for ourselves, if we were in the position of he who is the object of our pity.

The essential tragic effect depends on maintaining the intimate alliance between pity and fear. In some inferior tragedies, the primary and predominant impression is fear, in others pity, but the full tragic effect needs the union of the two. Otherwise the distinctive function of tragedy as Catharsis cannot be discharged. The intimate alliance between pity and fear is based on an imaginative union with another's life. Thus the spectator is lifted out of himself. He becomes one with the tragic sufferer, and through him with humanity at large. Therefore one effect of the drama, is that through it, a man becomes many instead of one; it makes him lose his proper personality and so proves false to himself.

The Role of Tragic Hero in Catharsis

The tragic effect is caused by the tragic hero. Aristotle has discussed the kind of character and the kind of reversal of fortune suitable for a tragic hero. He says that the sight of a whole good man brought low from prosperity to disaster is neither pitiful nor terrible but only shocking. A bad man raised from adversity to success has not the necessary tragic qualities. It is neither pitiful nor terrible. Moreover, the downfall of a bad man will not arouse pity or fear. There remains only the moderate, brought to disaster not by vice but by some hamartia (fault). In Aristotle's opinion, he is an ideal tragic hero. Thus tragic hamartia in a hero is responsible for causing or exciting the feelings of pity and fear. The tragic sufferer is a man like us and on this the inner likeness of tragedy as described in the Poetics mainly depends. Without it, our complete sympathy would not be enlisted crucially the resemblance on which Aristotle insists is one of moral character. His hero is not a man of flawless perfection; by which we must not understand that he has merely average or mediocre qualities. Indeed, he rises above the common level with dignity but he is not free from weaknesses and imperfections. He must be rich and full of human qualities that other men possess. He must possess so much of human nature that we are able in some sense to identify ourselves with him, to make his misfortunes our own. At the same time, he is raised above us in external dignity and station. He is a prince or famous man who falls from height of greatness.

Shakespeare's tragic heroes enable us to grasp the emotional effect of tragedy. The history of Hamlet is a story of moral poisoning. He has a delicate soul and an impassioned imagination. On this soul, which character and training make more sensitive than others, misfortune suddenly falls. At this stage, we not only feel his virtues but also his weaknesses as our own. His speeches are as real as our own

thought. Their reality is in the reader's mind so much so that every reader begins to feel like Hamlet.⁹

Similarly, the central scenes of Lear's tragedy unfold a picture of fourfold storm and chaos of the elements, chaos in man's mind, chaos in the moral world and congregated sorrows. Shakespeare has beautifully drawn a dark and awful picture of the ingratitude of children towards a father. The maltreatment of the children draws Lear to madness and despair.

There is a pathetic picture of the mad king bare-headed in the tempest, with no friend save his poor faithful fool. It is a universal tragedy. Before we finish, we feel ourselves transported into a world torn by strife between the powers of good and evil. Thus, its theme becomes universal. It shows a world war on heroic scale between evil and Good, suffering, enduring and sustaining. Edger's remarks are significant, when he sees the terrible suffering that has deranged the mental balance of King Lear and his companions.

His own sufferings begin to appear to him little and insignificant in comparison to those of his master. He says:

When our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.....
How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow -

King Lear Act III. 6-7

Lines 100-108

⁹ Idea is based here upon Leech Clifford in Shakespeare's Tragedies Chatto & Windus, London, 1950.

Conclusion

The tragic catharsis involves not only the idea of an emotional relief, but the further idea of purifying the emotion so relieved. But it must be borne in mind that the homeopathic cure of pity and fear by similar emotions is possible. Thus tragedy satisfies a universal requirement. The fear and pity on and through which it operates are not, as some have maintained, rare and abnormal emotions. All men, Aristotle says, are susceptible to them; some persons have them in overpowering measure. For the modern as well as for the ancient world, they are still among the primary instincts, always present, if below the surface, and ready to be called into activity. The Greeks, because of their temperament, circumstances, and religious beliefs, may have been more sensitive to their influence than we are, and more likely to suffer from them in a morbid form, but their tragedies indeed, in the beginning were of religious excitement. Overall, however, this discussion of the Aristotelian view of tragedy will serve as a context for further analysis of Shakespeare and Hardy.

CHAPTER FIVE

MODERN CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE AND HARDY

In previous chapters, tragedy has been described on the basics of Aristotle's point of view but it is important to acknowledge other recent critical theories mentioned briefly in this chapter. There is no doubt that Aristotle provided the foundation to understand its term in a wider spectrum but later on certain critics also came forward with their views on the subject. Recent work disregarding with Aristotle, has put tragedy on the literary agenda with a different angle. John Darakakis, Jonathan Dollimore and Allan Sinfield, Jean E. Howard and Marjorie F. O'Connor have contributed considerably to Shakespearean tragedy in the name of modern criticism. Peter Widdowson has written similarly on Hardy.

The history of modern Shakespeare criticism is full of contradictions. Some critics have focussed on the poetry he uses in the dramas while others argue about the structure of actions in the plot. In the texts of Shakespeare generally hero's power and vulnerability have co-existed increasingly. But the dominant critics which hold these texts as idealist constructions. In spite of all this, Shakespeare can never be a contemporary of modern writers except by the strategy of appropriation. For example criticism of The Tempest has been traditionally related to the text by reference to a variety of ideas. Shakespeare himself was influenced by his reading of the Bermuda Pamphlets. Therefore, it is said that the source of The Tempest was his reading of the Bermuda Pamphlets. But the play is also described as belonging to the genre of pastoral romance and is seen as occupying a particular place in the Canon of Shakespeare's

works. However, it is also argued that The Tempest differs importantly from its main source.¹⁰

William Shakespeare as a dramatist has remained a target of study in the twentieth century. Notable scholars have revealed in their studies that the general questions of power and ideology used in his dramas have led to the re-thinking of a whole range of problems posed by the dramas of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. We find these evidences when we study Alan Sinfield's Literature in Protestant England 1550-1660 (1983) and Jonathan Dollimore's Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Dramas of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries (1984). For these critics, culture is in fact an integral part of society and when it is mixed with materialism in literary perspective, it gives new dimensions. This term was used by Raymond Williams in Britain in the post war period which could be broadly characterised as cultural analysis.¹¹

The development of cultural materialism in relation to renaissance literature is very recent. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to represent idealist criticism as still confidently dominant in Shakespeare studies.

Historians who have examined the effects of social change in England and reactions to it present a picture quite opposite to other critics:

"In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries...this almost hysterical demand for order at all costs was caused by a collapse of most of the props of the medieval world picture. The unified dogma and organisation of the Catholic Church found itself challenged by a number of rival creeds and institutional structures...the reliance upon the intellectual authority of the Ancients was threatened by new scientific discoveries. Moreover in England there occurred a phase of unprecedented social and geographical mobility which at the higher levels transformed the composition and size of the gentry and

¹⁰ Francis Barker and Peter Hulme: "Nymphs and reapers etc" in John Darakakis ed: Alternative Shakespeares (London, Routledge, 1996).

¹¹ Argument based upon Darakakis John with reference to his Alternative Shakespeare's London, New York 1985.

professional classes, and at the lower levels tore hundreds of thousands of individuals loose from their traditional kinship and neighbourhood backgrounds."¹²

In considering criticism, we find important differences within materialistic criticism of Renaissance literature between those who emphasise the process of consolidation and those who discover resistances to it. However, since criticism is an expression of independent views of critic, therefore, comments of critic cannot be ignored outrightly.

Now coming to Thomas Hardy, it is assumed that he is extensively read by the general public and widely studied in educational institutions of the world as most of his works are included in syllabuses.¹³ His life and work is widely reproduced by publishing and tourist industries, and by the radio, television and film. As a poet of Wessex, he touches the boundaries of literature very successfully like Shakespeare and thereby becomes a symbol of natural cultural heritage. He is also a writer of the world whose works have been translated into many languages. Like Shakespeare, he is also on the syllabus of English literature both in developed and in developing countries of the globe. Thomas Hardy is a cultural figure of the present time literature. He portrays the ways of human behaviour, describes the places and details, the customs and traditions, in such a way that he creates an everlasting impression on the readers who begin to assume that his descriptions are genuinely true.

On account of all this, Hardy is known as a cultural figure of late nineteenth as well as of late twentieth century. If we examine his literary age, we will consider the way Hardy has been shaped by criticism. In each case, his fiction was determined under

¹² Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977) pp653-54.

¹³ Argument is based on Peter Widdowson with reference to his *Hardy in History* Routledge, (London New York 1989).

two general rules of 'good' and 'bad' fiction within which his texts may be read, understood and appreciated. That is why, some of his fiction is labelled as 'minor novels'. Secondly, Hardy represented rural England in his writings, therefore, he is regarded as the central figure of the national culture. Hardy has received every favour of media, due to which his literary works are widely read and included in the syllabuses of educational institutions. Thirdly, the news, television and film media also exposed Hardy's works to the people so much so that when they see his stories on the screen, they find an urge to read his novels.

Logically and technically, when modern critics criticise Shakespeare and Hardy, they highlight their place in literature, characteristics, formation of plots, style, theme of their works, sources of plays, tragic elements and their gradual literary developments. although these views have no direct concern with Aristotle's view point, which is the basis of my dissertation, yet I understand that while discussing these aspects, modern critics have not spared even Aristotle. These critics also focused their views on A.C.Bradley and similar critics who contributed to understanding Shakespeare's tragedy with reference to his tragic dramas which is again the chief canon of my dissertation. I therefore feel since my dissertation is fundamentally focussed on the Aristotelian views, I developed it in the light of Aristotle's principles. Summing up my argument on modern criticism, I would rather submit that there is no doubt that Shakespeare while writing his dramas was not confined only to his foremost tragic works, but at the same time he won laurels and commendations in comedy and tragi comedy as well. Hence, modern critics while commenting on Shakespeare have expressed their opinions on Shakespeare's tragic and comic plays as well, whereas I have personally tried to throw a light on the aspects of tragedy with reference to Shakespeare's and Hardy's some of main literary works.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF THE TRAGIC OUTLOOK OF SHAKESPEARE

The tragedies of Shakespeare represent characteristics particular to the period of his life. For example Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear and Antony and Cleopatra all symbolise different shades in the tragic outlook of the dramatist, because they represent the grim and dark side of man in varying pitch. The evil in Othello and Macbeth is much more horrid and terrible than that in Julius Caesar and Hamlet. In spite of all these obvious differences there runs a deep note of the still sad music of humanity, which is audible in almost every tragedy of Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's dramas, the story usually depicts the troubled part of the hero's life which precedes and leads up to his death. There is no drama at the end of which the hero remains alive, in the Shakespearean sense of tragedy. It is essentially a story of suffering and calamity all leading towards death. However, Shakespeare did not confine himself to the idea of Greek tragedy. Thus, tragedy with Shakespeare is always concerned with persons of high degree. The fate of a hero affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire.

It is in his character's philosophy that Hamlet the son of a king represents royal society and plays the definite role of a hero in the drama. He is a man of high calibre but circumstances lead him through such calamities that his character is bound to suffer till the end of play and on account of that all his near and dear ones are naturally shaded. He is often found in such a dilemma. Thus, on occasions Hamlet abuses himself:

How stand I then,
That have a father killed, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep,..... (Hamlet Act IV.4:56-59)

While on another occasion Hamlet is found expressing his powerful ideas in these lines:

To be or not to be that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. (Hamlet Act III.1:56-60)

Thus there is not only an outward conflict of persons or parties, but there is also a conflict of forces in the hero's soul. As a rule, the hero is at some point or other in the action torn by an inward struggle, and it is precisely in depicting this inner and deeper conflict that Shakespeare is at his best. Shakespearean tragedy may thus be said to revolve round the tragic hero. It has two fundamental aspects. Firstly, it is a tale of woe and suffering of a man in high estate, culminating in his death. Secondly, this suffering is generally unexpected but not a heavenly visitation. It proceeds from the tragic character mainly. The second characteristic supplements the first and emphasises the fact that this action is fundamentally the expression of character.

As we proceed further in the drama, we find Hamlet overwhelmed by emotions as he attempts to put an end to the career of his uncle. But by chance he kills Polonius (Counsellor to the king). He is also in love with Ophelia but we find that she is used as a tool to deviate Hamlet's mind from killing his uncle. Thus, she is urged to return Hamlet's gifts to him by saying:

My honoured lord, you know right well you did,
And with these words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
Take these again. For to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord. (Hamlet Act III.1:97-102)

The love of Hamlet for Ophelia can be viewed at the grave yards scene when he discovers her dead. He expresses his sentiments in the following lines:

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
Could not with all their quantity of love
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her? (Hamlet Act V.1:266-268)

All these situations bring about turning points in Hamlet's character and such incidents produce a tragic effect in the drama that was the fundamental style of Shakespeare. By narrating these situations, Shakespeare has very truly advocated his individuality in presenting tragedy through treatment of different characters. It is not vain to describe here that the plot or sub plot of all his tragic works revolve round the court, royal society and its problems, dealing with all those characters who are associated with the main plot in one way or another where in heroes and heroines play central and chief parts in the story.

Technically, Hamlet suffers due to inertia present in his character. Therefore, sufferings and several other calamities are responsible for bringing about his tragic fall. The murder of his father, the gruesome action of his uncle, the marriage of his mother with his uncle, the appearance of the ghost on certain occasions, the ill treatment of Polonius, the plan of king Cladius to get rid of Hamlet by sending him to England, the madness of Ophelia that results in her death and the friendship of Laertes which later on turns to his enmity are sufficient to make Hamlet's character tragic.

Again, in 'Macbeth', we find that the place of an evil in the tragic universe thrusts itself once more into the forefront. A Shakespearean tragedy, as a rule, has a special tone or atmosphere of its own, quite perceptible but difficult to describe. The effect of this atmosphere is marked with unusual strength in Macbeth. Macbeth has a sin in his soul. His own evil brings about his own doom. Evil is inhuman; Sin is unnaturalness rather than unrighteousness. Shakespeare provides Macbeth with appropriate environing circumstances. Due to a variety of influences which combine with acting and reacting, they form a whole; and the desolation of the blasted heath, the design of the witches, the darkness of the night, seem to emanate from one and the same

source. This effect is strengthened by the multitude of small touches, which at any one moment may be little noticed but still leave their mark on the imagination.

Darkness broods over this tragedy. It is remarkable that almost all the scenes that remain in the memory take place either at night or in some dark spot. The vision of the dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night scenes. The witches dance in the thick air of a storm, or the black and midnight hags receive Macbeth in a cavern. The blackness of night is to the hero a fearful thing that makes him feel the arrival of the supernatural in the play. The faint glimmerings of the western sky at twilight are here menacing: It is the hour when the traveller hastens to reach safety in his inn and when Banquo rides homeward to meet his assassins; the hour when 'light thickens', when 'night's black agents to their prey do rouse', when the wolf begins to howl, and the owl to scream, and withered murder steals forth to his work. Macbeth bids the stars hide their fires that his 'black' desires may be concealed; Lady Macbeth calls thick night to come, pall'd in the dunest smoke of hell. The moon is down and no stars shine when Banquo, dreading the dreams of the coming night, goes unwillingly to bed, and leaves Macbeth to wait for the summons of the little bell. When the next day should dawn, its light is 'strangled' and 'darkness does the face of earth entomb'. In the whole drama, the sun seems to shine only twice; first, in the beautiful but ironical passage where Duncan sees the swallows flitting round the castle of death; and afterwards, when at the close the avenging army gathers to rid the earth of its shame. The failure of nature in Lady Macbeth is marked by her fear of darkness; she has light by her continually. And in the one phrase of fear that escapes her lips even in sleep, it is of the darkness of the place of torment that she speaks. (v.1.35).

All these agencies - the darkness, the lights and colours that illuminate it, the storm that rushes through it, the violent and gigantic images - conspire with the

appearance of the witches and the ghost to awaken horror and in some degree also a supernatural dread. And to this effect other influences contribute. The pictures called up by the mere words of witches stir the same feelings - those for example, of the spell-bound sailor driven tempest - tossed nine times nine weary weeks, and never visited by sleep night or day; of the drop of poisonous foam that forms on the moon, and, falling to earth, is collected for pernicious ends; of the sweltering venom of the toad, the finger of the babe killed at its birth by its own mother, the tricklings from the murders gibbet. In Nature, again, something is felt to be at work, sympathetic with human guilt and supernatural malice. She labours with portents:

Lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible, (Macbeth Act III.3:53-54)

The owl clamours all through the night; Duncan's horses devour each other in frenzy; the dawn comes but no light with it. Common sights and sounds, the crying of cricket the croak of the raven, the light thickening after sunset, the home coming of the rocks, are all ominous. Then, as if to deepen these impressions, Shakespeare has concentrated attention on the obscurer regions of man's being, on phenomena which make it seem that he is in the power of secret forces lurking below, and independent of his consciousness and will, such as the relapse of Macbeth from conversation into a reverie, during which he gazes fascinated at the image of murder drawing closer and closer; the appearance on his face of strange things he never meant to show; the pressure of imagination heightening into illusion, like the vision of a dagger in the air, at first bright, then suddenly splashed with blood, or the sound of a voice that cried 'sleep no more' and would not be silenced. To these are added other, and constant, allusions to sleep, man's strange half conscious life; to the misery of its withholding; to the terrible dreams of remorse; to the cursed thoughts from which Banquo is free by day, but which

tempt him in his sleep: and again to abnormal disturbances of sleep; in the two men, of whom one during the murder of Duncan laughed in his sleep, and the other raised a cry of murder; and in Lady Macbeth, who rises to re-enact in somnambulism those scenes the memory of which is pushing her on to madness or suicide. All this has one effect, to excite supernatural alarm and, even more, a dread of the presence of evil not only in its recognised but all through and around our mysterious nature. The very first words uttered by Macbeth:

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen", (Macbeth Act 1.3:37)

are an example to which attention has often been drawn; for they surprise the reader by recalling the words of the witches in the first scene,

Fair is foul, and foul is fair. (Macbeth Act 1.1:9)

Of all the characters of Shakespeare, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's characters are high, profound, sublime and both inspire, far more than the other tragic heroes, the feeling of awe. They are never detached in imagination from the atmosphere which surrounds them and adds to their grandeur and terror. These two characters are fired by one and the same passion of ambition; and to considerable extent they are alike. The disposition of each is high, proud and commanding. They are born to rule if not to reign. They are peremptory or contemptuous to their inferiors. They are not children of light like Brutus or Hamlet; they are of the world. We observe in them no love of country, and no interest in the welfare of any one outside their family. Their habitual thoughts and aims are and, we imagine, long have been all of station and power. And though in both there is something, and in one much, of what is higher - honour, conscience, humanity - they do not live consciously in the light of these things or speak their language. It is not that they are egoists. They have no separate ambitions. They support and love one another. They suffer together. And if as time goes on, they drift a

little apart, they are not vulgar souls to be alienated and recriminate when they experience the fruitlessness of their ambition. They remain to the end tragic, even grand.

So far there is much likeness between them. Otherwise, they are contrasted and the action is built upon this contrast. Their attitude towards the projected murder of Duncan are quite different; and it produces in them equally different effects. In consequence, they appear in the earlier part of the play as of equal importance, but afterwards she retires more and more into the background, and he becomes unmistakably the leading figure and to some extent the more complex character.

The play 'Macbeth' spreads out from our interest in the hero; and the hero is here a criminal or rather a man obsessed by his relation to those criminal tendencies that are so universal that we best describe them by speaking of 'evil'. Therefore, we can say that this play is in fact a discovery or anatomy of evil. Of all Shakespeare's plays Macbeth is the one obsessively concerned with evil. E.M.W. Tillyard, writes his opinion very effectively about Macbeth. According to him, "Good struggles forward in the world of Macbeth; but evil is all pervasive. The whole lands lies under its interdict; good men die or fly; but even in flight they cannot escape from its power."¹⁴ In brief, Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' is surrounded by evils and these evils are responsible to make Macbeth's character under dark clouds of tragedy.

"So long as Macbeth's imagination is active we watch him fascinated; we feel suspense, horror, awe; in which are latent, also admiration and sympathy. But soon these feelings vanish. He is no longer 'infirm of purpose': he becomes domineering,

¹⁴ Shakespeare's History Plays by E.M.W. Tillyard Page 317.

even brutal, or he becomes a cool pitiless hypocrite. He is generally said to be very bad actor, but it is not wholly true. Whenever, his imagination stirs, he acts badly."¹⁵

The character of Macbeth is mysterious. It reflects his changing state of mind. On one occasion, he mutters in despair:

"Wake Duncan with they knocking! I would thou could'st." (Act II.2-3:74)

When, half an hour later, he returns with Lennox from the room of the murder, and breaks out:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality.
All is but toys, renown and grace is dead,
The wire of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of. (Macbeth Act II.3:88-93)

We find the language of his speeches is meant to deceive, but it utters at the same time his profoundest feelings. One also hears him murmuring in the following words:

Duncan in his grave:
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well; (Macbeth Act III.2:23)

Or,

Better be with the dead (Macbeth Act III.2:19)

Or,

I have lived long enough: (Macbeth Act V.3:19)

And it speaks its last words on the last day of his life:
Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."¹⁶ (Macbeth Act V.5:23-28)

The variation in the role of Macbeth remarkably exhibits the profound development of his character.

¹⁵ Shakespearean Tragedy by A.C. Bradley from his lectures on Macbeth page 298.

¹⁶ Shakespearean Tragedy by A.C. Bradley from his lectures on Macbeth, pages 300-301.

"The tragic hero with Shakespeare, then need not be "good", though generally he is "good" and therefore at once wins sympathy in his error."¹⁷ Macbeth, however, does impress most of its readers as having a powerful and unmistakable unity of this kind: the plot, characters, and imagery all seem to spring from one inspiration. The action of the play as a whole is best expressed in a phrase that Macbeth himself uses in Act II, Scene 3, the aftermath of the murder. Macbeth is trying to appear innocent, but everything he says betrays his clear sense of his own evil motivation, or action. Trying to excuse his murder of Duncan's grooms, he says:

"The expedition of my violent love" (Act II.3:108) [for Duncan] Macbeth, of course literally means that his love for Duncan was so strong and swift that it got ahead of his reason, which would have counselled a pause. But in the same manner, we have seen his greed and ambition outrun his reason when he committed the murder; and in the same way all of the characters, in the irrational darkness of Scotland's evil hour, are compelled in their action to strive beyond what they can see by reason alone.

"In the first part of the play 'Macbeth' both the imagery and the actions of the various characters indicate or "imitate" the main action. Aristotle says that characters are imitated 'with a view to the action' - and the porter, who has little importance in the story - is presented to reveal the action of the play as whole in the unexpected light of farcical analogies, contemporary or lewd and physical. The illustrations in Macbeth must serve to indicate the imitation of action in language, character, and plot in the first two acts of the play. Macbeth and his lady are embarked on a race against reason itself; and all Scotland, the "many" whose lives depend upon the monarch, is precipitated into the same darkness and desperate strife. Shakespeare's monarchs do usually colour the spiritual life of the realms. And we, who remember Hitler's Germany, can understand that even Hitler's exiles, like the refugees from Russian or Spanish tyranny, brought the shadow to this country with them".¹⁸

¹⁷ An approach of Shakespeare by Norman Raskin in his collection of essays on 'The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy' page 15.

¹⁸ From an essay on "Macbeth as the imitation of an action" by Francis Ferguson Page 126-127.

In accordance to this formulation Macbeth is the imitation of an action. This action is presented in the metaphors, characters and the plot of the first two acts; and also in the peripetia, with pathos and recognitions, in the great scene between Malcolm, Macduff and Ross.

Macbeth defines a particular kind of evil - the evil that results from a lust of power:

"The main theme of the reversal of values is given out simply and clearly in the first scene - 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair.' And these are associated premonitions of the conflict, disorder and moral darkness into which Macbeth will plunge himself. Well before the end, we are in possession not only of the positive values against which the Macbeth evil will be defined but to the related aspects of that evil, which is simultaneously felt as a strained and an unnatural perversion of the will and obfuscation of the clear light of reason, a principle of disorder (both in the single state of man' and in his wider social relations), and a pursuit of illusions. All these impression, which as the play proceeds assume that status of organising ideas, are produced by the interaction of all resources of poetic drama-action, contrast, statement, implication, imagery and allusion. Thus the sense of the unnaturalness of evil is evoked not only by repeated explicit references but by the expression of unnatural sentiments and an unnatural violence of tone in such things as Lady Macbeth's invocation of the 'spirits' and her affirmation that she would murder the babe at her breast if she had sworn to do it. So, too the themes of false appearances are inseparable from evil."¹⁹

Following on from earlier commentary on Aristotle, it can therefore be stated that the all-pervading atmosphere which knights here describes proceeds from the characteristic "flaw" of Macbeth: his insane ambition.

There is no vague 'philosophy of nature' in Macbeth. The nature against which the 'unnaturalness' of Macbeth's evil is defined and judged is human nature; and essential characteristics of that nature - its capacity for and intimate dependence on relationship - are powerfully evoked throughout the play. In Act III, Scene IV Macbeth,

¹⁹ Taken from Chapter 6 on Macbeth by L.C. Knights from his book 'Some Shakespearean Themes and an Approach to Hamlet.' Pages 103-104.

overcome by his vision of Banquo's ghost, glances back to a time when murder was common to what will later be known as the Hobbesian state of nature:

Blood hath been shed ere now, i'the olden time,
Ere humanc statute purged the gentle weal;
Ay, and since too, murders have been performed
Too terrible for the ear. The time has been
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end. But now they rise again
with twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools. This is more strange
Than such a murder is. (Macbeth III.IV.76-84)

This is a more profound version of the origins of society than is suggested by the notion of contract or expediency. What 'purges' the supposed mere multitude and makes it into a 'gentle' common-weal is a decree greater than any law in which it may be embodied, for it is what is dictated by the very fact of being human; if one accepts humanity then one can't murder with impunity. Nor is it simply a matter of judicial punishment: the murdered man 'rises' again, in you. Killing may be common in wild nature, it is not natural to man as man; it is a violation of his essential humanity.

If we analyse this tragedy in comparison with 'Hamlet', we will find the story revolving round the same royal society. All incidents of the story are interconnected in one way or the other. For example Kings, Queens, Courtiers ambition to kill another king in order to hold a similar position. Unlike Hardy's novels we find almost the same problems, similar atmosphere, similar plot, similar consequences, style and upper society, so much so that we seldom find any simple, poor, downtrodden, honourable, leading character representing lower English society and this confirms the main writing style of Shakespeare's tragedies. However, in order to mark further Shakespeare's individual style, we have to keep following certain aspects briefly in mind.

1- Exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man.

In Shakespearean tragedy, we mostly come across a considerable number of characters. Nevertheless, the story of a drama revolves round a leading/central character although in certain plays, especially in love tragedies like 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Antony and Cleopatra', we come across a hero and a heroine. The story ends with the death of several characters, especially a hero. No drama at the end of which the hero remains alive, is in the Shakespearean sense a tragedy. Hence, we can say, the story of Shakespeare's tragedy is essentially the story of suffering and calamity where in all leading characters go to meet death at the end.

Besides this, Shakespeare also introduces non-voluntary along with voluntary actions or deeds of the characters in the tragedy.

The following is the description of non-voluntary actions:

- (i) **Abnormal conditions of mind:** Shakespeare represents abnormal conditions of mind such as insanity (King Lear), delusion (Macbeth, a dagger in the air), somnambulism (as Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep). These deeds/actions are not representative of character.
- (ii) **Introduction of the supernatural:** Shakespeare also introduces the supernatural into some of his tragedies. He introduces ghosts and witches who have supernatural knowledge. This supernatural element cannot be considered as an illusion in the mind of one of the characters. But the supernatural is always placed in relation to the character. It gives a confirmation to inward movements already present in the character. We find such instances in the character of Brutus, in Macbeth and in Hamlet. Moreover, its influence is never of a compulsive kind. It is an important factor related to the problem which the hero has to face.

- (iii) **Chance of Accident:** Shakespeare recognises chance or accident to be an important factor in human life. Therefore, he allows such chances to take place in his tragedies. To ignore this would be to deviate from reality of life. It may be called an accident in the sense that a pirate ship attacked Hamlet's ship, so that he was able to return to Denmark. But Shakespeare does not allow chance to exercise a great influence, so that it may not destroy the sense of the causal connection between the character, deed and catastrophe. Moreover, Shakespeare introduces chance when the action is well advanced and the impression of the causal sequence is too firmly fixed to be impaired.

In Shakespeare's tragedy, it is quite apparent that destiny is subordinate to character and character itself is the most important ingredient of the tragic action. On this basis, Shakespearean tragedy has been regarded as the tragedy of character, i.e. human action producing calamity and ending in the death of a man of high estate. Thus the force of destiny, though not so prominent in the beginning, makes itself felt soon after the tragic hero has committed a blunder and from that moment the character is balanced by an unknown power. There is always a "tide in the affairs of men." The moment it goes away from life of a hero, with him the lives of others, are lost in shallows and miseries. Therefore, Shakespearean tragedy can be rightly interpreted as a tragedy of character and destiny.

2-Tragic Appeal

The tragic hero of Shakespeare is the author of his woes and sorrows. When we realise that for the ultimate tragedy none is to blame but the hero himself, our fear and

pity modifies accordingly. It is very strange that our emotions of pity are roused even for the evil characters in Shakespeare. Macbeth is a tragic hero in the full Shakespearean sense. Even though he is a murderer, a man who is faithless to his own master, we have a great pity for him in our hearts. Shakespeare never means to portray his heroes as pure evil monstrosities, because nothing can be perfect in his imperfect world. So, Shakespeare is true to nature. He holds the mirror up to life. There is brightness and darkness; there is joy and misery; and there is evil and good. His characters are taken from real life. They are chosen from all grades and shades. Shakespeare believes in poetic justice that has co-relation between an ideal distribution of reward and punishment. It is also a recognised fact that though Shakespeare does not believe in this theory completely, nevertheless he advocates that the innocent suffers along with the guilty. He never preaches that men are always virtuous. He never portrays nature always just and philosophical. The Supreme laws of God are embodied in it but tragic art is dramatic when it presents the true facts of life. The criterion of art is realism. It is more enduring and everlasting if it approaches reality. It can inspire if it is based upon the practical experience of life. Art and inspiration should go side by side but inspiration alone with artificiality cannot develop a great art as a whole. Drama always depicts life as it is. It never represents life as a bed of roses or as a bed of thorns. It is neither a filmy colourful dream nor a sad awakening or a tale of tears. In real life, justice can fail. It is never proportionate to the wrong. Thus poetic justice or ideal justice is impossible in this imperfect world. Shakespeare presents real life. His dramas teach us as life teaches. He builds his fabrics as nature does on right and wrongs but he does not struggle to make nature more systematic than she is. In the subtle interflow of good and evil, and in sufferings of innocence Shakespeare is true to real experience. He depicts the mystery of life as he finds it.

Shakespeare's tragic appeal conveys the sense of moral order which pervades his works. The tragedies of Shakespeare sometimes begin with a sense of pervasive evil. Evil is the main source of convulsion that comes to the surface in the conflict. The main source of convulsion which produces suffering and death is never good. Good contributes to the convulsion only from its tragic implication with its opposite in one and the same character. In Hamlet, this plain moral evil is not obviously the prime source within the play. It lies at the back of it. Evil can also be discerned in the hero, but in this sense it has a very wide significance. It strikes as a very eccentric and peculiar tragic trait in his character as for example, pride, irresolution, rashness, simplicity and the like. It contributes to the conflict and the catastrophe. As well as in the central figure of the play, evil appears as something negative, barren, weakening, destructive: a principle of death. It isolates, disunites and tends to annihilate not only its opposite but itself. The diagnosis of evil as portrayed by Shakespeare, can be accepted by all very accurate and vivid. The evil presented in them may be safely taken to represent the evil in real life. All his plays constitute a microcosm and a tiny tragic world in which human nature in its various moods and conditions, good, noble, mediocre, mean and sordid, is accurately portrayed. To depict this world as a moral order in which evil must perish, is to fail in absolute conformity to nature. The advocates of the moral order theory start from the character of the evil in Shakespearean tragedy. It is chiefly evil that violently disturbs the order of the world. Tragedy represents the convulsion between evil and good. The tragic world, thus produces both evil and good. Hence, there is no tragedy in its expulsion of evil but on contrary a tragedy is that which involves the waste of good.²⁰

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See the lectures on Shakespearean Tragedy by A.C. Bradley. Page 28-29.

3-Moral Vision in Shakespearean Tragedy

When Shakespeare writes tragedy, he is an artist imposing order and form upon the raw materials of experience. Each of his characters is moulded to fit an intellectual conception which the play in its totality is designed to embody. Every one of his tragedies is a separate attempt, if not finally to answer the great problem of man's relation to the forces of evil in the world, at least to pose it in such a way that new facets may be freshly illuminated in terms of human experience. If no two tragedies are exactly alike, it is because the questions with which they deal are themselves so complex and many-sided, and because Shakespeare's insight into human experience is of infinite range. He approaches the great issues of human life from many angles, with different hypotheses, and we have a resulting diversity in his plays. His primary purpose is not accurate depiction of life, and realistic as his technique may be, both character and event are distorted from reality when the total thematic design of a tragedy demands such distortion.

Shakespearean tragedy translates moral vision into dramatic form, and thus it is a way of knowing. That this way is different from that of science is obvious, for tragedy deals with things of the imagination, and its kind of truth must be emotionally experienced. But the experience of tragedy may bear a closer relation to that of religion than has been recognised. Different as the method of tragedy may be from that of religion both pursue the same kind of knowledge. Tragedy and religion seek by different means the same affirmation of order, and in each there is a large emotional component that can never be in science. A vision which comprehended no order or meaning in the universe could not be tragedy at all. It should be mere calamity such as we read about, in the newspapers everyday, without dramatic significance. Tragedy must impose on the raw material of human experience a pattern in which the relation of

human suffering to human joy becomes apparent, and out of this, must come the feeling of reconciliation with, which every one of Shakespeare's tragedies ends.

This common goal allies tragedy to religion. Historically, we have always known that tragedy both in ancient Greece and western Europe emerged out of religious ritual, but we have generally ignored the close relation which tragedy has maintained to the religious experience. Like the Christian paradox of the fortunate fall, tragedy searches for order and purpose in apparent disaster, and in doing so, it reinforces a system of belief which essentially is religious.

To assert the intellectual content of tragedy is not to say that a Shakespearean play can never be paraphrased as a simple philosophical statement. The intellectual end is cast in terms of specific characters and specific action, and it is communicated in poetry. The characters are not real people, but part of Shakespeare's artistry lies in his ability to create the illusion that they are so that the theatre audience is able emotionally to identify with them. Ultimately, their functions are symbolic ones dictated by specific ideas and moral positions, but these are given a local habitation and name. Shakespeare as an artist goes beyond the philosopher in that his abstract ideas are tested in the imaginative setting of real life situations.

When we recognise the affinity of tragedy to the religious experience, we see why a cardinal element in the tragedy of the Christian Renaissance is the possibility of man's redemption from evil. Just as Adam, in spite of his fall from Paradise, had, by the grace of God, been given the knowledge by means of which he might eventually overcome evil, the Shakespearean tragic hero through the process of his destruction may learn the nature of evil and thus attain a spiritual victory in spite of death. This does not mean that all Shakespeare's tragic heroes attain salvation, for they do not, and it is not necessary that they should. Hamlet or King Lear may undergo redemption, but Richard

III or Macbeth is unequivocally damned, nevertheless the reconciliation experienced by the audience never the need be no less complete. Tragedy is a social art form, and the reconciliation must take place, within the audience and not within the actors. The damnation of Macbeth, no less than the salvation of Lear, may serve to affirm the feeling of moral order in a purposive universe upon which tragic reconciliation depends. In spite of the fate of the tragic hero, society at the end of each tragedy must undergo a symbolic rebirth; there is always Fortinbras, Edgar, or Malcolm ready to begin life with a renewed hope in the future, and in this hope, the audience imaginatively participates. This final sense of reconciliation is an essential ingredient of tragedy, of the Greek no less than the Elizabethan, and it was probably what Aristotle meant by Katharsis.

Conclusion

For Shakespeare's tragedies were imaginative experiences. In other words, things were apprehended through the whole of his sentient nature. They were not merely ideas. In each tragedy, his insight seems to perceive and reveal the moral ulcer whose malignancy destroys the fabric of the physical and spiritual life of his protagonists. But in his four deep tragedies, he sees more profoundly.

From the preceding discussion, it is apparent that Shakespearean tragedy is profoundly spiritual. In its whole ambit, it takes life as a manifestation of phenomena which are the substance of morality. But it is occupied with life as life is lived in a universe, where in mightier forces than those of man are perpetually exerting their powers in shaping the lot mankind. These are vast mysteries. In their ways, they are incapable of being resolved into any but the simplest theological formulary. Their complicity in making man's destiny is so indirect and so remote that, as divinities, they have no assessable or definable role in the overt plan of Shakespeare's tragedies. His

preoccupation is moral and not religious. In his moral day to day existence, there is no reason to suspect that Shakespeare was not a good Elizabethan Anglican: but the ideal world in which he moved, when he was imaginatively excited was the world of man and of morality, not that of the gods and theology. Yet Shakespeare's moral world is not inconsistent with a universe capable of being apprehended religiously.

In Shakespeare, there is no hard and fast dichotomy between body and soul. He appears to find the spirit of a man as the characteristic functioning of the complex organism of flesh, blood nerve, heart and brain, as in each man it manifests itself distinctively through a form of conduct which is the outcome of that particular man's instinct, passion, reason and will. In his tragedies, physical death involves a cessation of the spirit within the body. But bodily death is only tragic when it entails or follows or occasions mutilation of the individual and, thereby, of the general spirit. The death of a human spirit is the extermination of man. Hence, the note which marks the final depth of tragedy is often the voice which cries that no longer is there anything serious in mortality, that life is no longer worth the living. The expression of this utter defeat may be directly phrased, as it is in the despair of a Macbeth when he finds that life is a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing: not in the pathetic recognition by a King Lear when he realises the inscrutable but final destruction of what for him as an individual was the only hope of happiness:

No, no no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all?

King Lear (Act V.3:301-303)

For man, and for Shakespeare contemplating man, the true tragedy of life is conviction of its futility. This of course might well be the voice of despair uttered by one who had been exalted with an exhilarating sense of the infinite richness of life. In

tragedies, of course, one participates in the unutterable sorrows of moral existence. Tragedy comes on man not only and not mainly through evil and sin: it relentlessly pursues the virtuous-minded, and often they seem to fall to the unforeseen outcome of their good intentions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THOMAS HARDY AS A NOVELIST: THE TRAGIC OUTLOOK IN HIS NOVELS

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2nd 1840 in the village of Higher Bockhampton near Dorchester, in England. England was then deep into the convulsive transformations of the Industrial Revolution. The reform movement known as chartism was stirring many people and frightening many more; but in the Dorset countryside at the south west corner of the island, one might almost have supposed that human existence was changeless. Nevertheless when Hardy was a boy of seven Dorchester saw its first railroad, and all through the second half of the century new machines, new methods, new men would be reaching into the countryside. The slow incursion of such novelties and threats forms a major theme in Hardy's fiction. But during the years of his childhood, these novelties and threats were not yet dramatically visible; and for a man who would experience the turning from country faith to modernist scepticism in the most personal way, there was an urgent need to recall the earlier days as a time of charm, peace and social unity. In Wessex, Hardy wrote:

Shepherds who attended with their flocks from long distances started from home two or three days, or even a week, before the fair, driving their charges a few miles each day - not more than ten or twelve - and resting them at night in hired fields by the wayside at previously chosen points, where they fed, having fasted since morning. The shepherd of each flock marched behind, a bundle containing his kit for the week strapped upon his shoulders, and in his hand his crook, which he used as the staff of his pilgrimage. Several of the sheep would get worn and lame, and occasionally a lambing occurred on the road. To meet these contingencies, there was frequently provided, to accompany the flocks from the remoter points, a pony and waggon into which the weakly ones were taken for the remainder of the journey.

(Far From the Madding Crowd, Chapter 50 page 396)

In the book from which these sentences are taken, 'Far From the Madding Crowd', Hardy speaks with evident feeling about the attachment to the soil of one

particular spot by generation after generation. Such sentiments at least among the writers of the past hundred and fifty years have rarely been enough to inspire great works:

"In the modern era, serious writing seems to require some rupture of faith and connection, and if the novelist of provincial rootedness is to achieve an art of universal he must choose to uproot himself still the "attachment to the soil of one particular spot" can be a starting point for that stringent and self-conscious nostalgia which animates the work of Hardy. Confined to the geography of imagination, the writer releases his nostalgia through a fabled reconstruction, a balked piety, which he then sets off against the ruthlessness of historical change. His possession of a slowly fading world, remembered with pathos and unrivalled knowledge, is for the writer an advantage comparable only to an unhappy childhood: it makes for tension, memory and a brief monopoly of legend."²¹

There is a strong Wordsworthian quality in Hardy's conviction. Perhaps one should say Hardy's passionate intuition is that the natural world is the source and repository of all of the energies that control human existence. Like Wordsworth, Hardy instinctively unites nature and man, making the external setting a kind of sharer in the human fate. Hardy's persuasion that the best life is one spent in undemanding harmony with the biological and geographical environment is still more Wordsworthian.

Again like Wordsworth, Hardy favours a harmonious submission to the natural order, and such figures of suffering and patience as a Gabriel Oak and Giles Winterbourne testify to the strength of that belief. For in his best novels, Hardy becomes emotionally entangled with such rebellious figures as Clym Yeobright and Jude Fawley, who decide to separate themselves from their environment and pay the price of estrangement. Hardy believes in the virtues of passivity, but as with Hawthorne his strongest creative energies are stirred by the assertiveness of men defining themselves apart from and in opposition to the natural order. At the end, he draws away from them and must punish their claims to self-sufficiency, yet in his heart of hearts he

²¹ Thomas Hardy "by Irving Howe" on page two of Background and Profile.

loves them. There is a repeated conflict between the principle of submission and the temptation of the Promethean, and from this conflict derives a large part of the drama and vitality in his novels. For Tess this context informs her betrayal at the hands of her two lovers. Yet the being she becomes is so rich and complete that she transcends their different cruelties as easily as she surpasses the fantasies they foist upon her. Because she is uncomplaining and oddly passive in her loyalty, she seems to be everybody's victim: first Alec's, then Angel's then Farmer Groby's at Flintcomb-Ash, and ultimately, of course, the victim of 'the President of Immortals.' Yet by the end, it is she who seems free and complete, even though they hang her, while her persecutors have become the victims of their own limitations.

The classic tragic hero, like King Lear, is redeemed from folly and pride by suffering. Tess, however, is neither foolish nor proud, only vulnerable. Irving Howe has described it eloquently:

Tess is that rare creature in literature: goodness made interesting. She is human life stretched and racked. Yet forever springing back to renewal...she comes to seem for us the potential of what life could be, just as what happens to her signifies what life too often becomes. She is Hardy's greatest tribute to the possibilities of human existence, for Tess is one of the greatest triumphs of civilisation: a natural girl.²²

Each of her lovers has his own reluctant way of acknowledging her uniqueness and power. Alec has only to see her again to lose his fierceness and Angel's solemnly liberated consciousness is finally no match for her tenderness. Even the bully Groby obscurely recognises her as an equal who won't be beaten. Yet she is never embattled or shrill, self-pitying or vengeful. Instead, in her stoical, grief stricken, unfooled way she remains a genuinely beautiful woman, with all that implies not only of physical beauty but of generosity, resourcefulness and endurance. Hardy, who never hesitated to

moralise about the perversity of the world in which she is trapped, seems strangely reticent about the depths and strengths he gradually revealed in Tess, as though it were all somehow beyond him.

There is one moment when Hardy seems to forget that Tess is a character in his own fiction and begins to talk about her like an old love, whom he has lost but cannot forget. Paradoxically, this strange interlude occurs on the first occasion when Tess, baptizing her dying baby, suddenly ceases to be a mere country girl and becomes a looming, mysterious, tragic figure, 'large, towering, and awful - a divine personage with whom they (her brothers and sisters) had nothing in common. Immediately, before this she has been reciting the service of baptism:

Then their sister...poured forth from the bottom of her heart the thanksgiving that follows, uttering it boldly and triumphantly in the stopt-diapason note which her voice acquired when her heart was in her speech, and which will never be forgotten by those who knew her.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles: chapter XIV pages 145.

This extraordinary personal intrusion is quite different from the many occasions when Hardy steps to deliver his sermons on rational pessimism. It is, instead, like a ghostly visitation, as though Tess herself had stepped into the room where he was writing and was standing suddenly at his side. The plangent, heart broken note of the great poems of loss and missed chances, which Hardy wrote more than twenty years later after his wife's death, is already present in Tess: in the continually roused, haunting descriptions of the landscape which crystallise intermittently into visionary states of mind, and above all in the power and beauty of the heroine whom he created and then, unwillingly, destroyed.

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Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1968, pp.130-31.

Now moving on to Hardy's other masterpiece which has gained world recognition 'The Mayor Of Casterbridge' we know that it is one of the handful of his novels that justify being considered as tragedies in near-classical terms. Hardy himself wrote other tragic novels, but not even 'The Return of the Native' approaches 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' in its adherence to traditional criteria of tragedy. It reaches to all required sublime heights without the flaws that so often attend strenuous ambition or an inappropriate subject.

Different readers have thought of Henchard as a Sophoclean tragic hero because he is doomed in the present because of what he has done in the past, or as an Aeschylean or Euripidean tragic hero because he is made to suffer more than his deeds would seem to require; there are echoes of King Lear as well as of biblical conflicts between Saul and David. None of these possibilities is stressed in this novel about a market town and two ambitious men. In this way, Hardy has made the novel a paradigm of Aristotle's description of a successful tragedy. The pride of elevation creates resentment that contributes to one's fall, as can be seen in the case of Henchard as well as in Lucetta at the visit of the Royal Personage. The characters accordingly face the reverse of their expectations.

Two of Hardy's comments about tragedy which frame the writing of the 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' suggest the primacy for him of the larger plot, structure over sensitive recording of minute details of personality. In April 1878 he wrote:

"A plot or tragedy should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices, and ambitions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said passions, prejudices, and ambitions."²³

(Life and Works, p.123).

Within a month of finishing The Mayor of Casterbridge he defines tragedy in brief:

"a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in catastrophe when carried out."²⁴

(Life and Work p.182)

Hardy founded this plot upon the universally observed conflict between generations of a family, between ways of moral and economic activity, between different interpretations of nature's impact upon humanity. The opposition of Henchard and Farfrae is essentially a formal contrast of two different ways of dealing with the same elusive crop conditions, from planting to speculation based on harvest weather. This opposition can be expanded to two ways of dealing with conditions of life, with people, with the Universe, as it is in Henchard and Farfrae: the friendly but shallow, and optimistic but withal cautious man who recognises that bankruptcy is a natural if avoidable feature of a business life, as opposed to the intellectually limited and cruel egoist who can perceive no other's life but as circling around his own but who also perceives and accepts to the profoundest depths of his being that actions have consequences, and who while he can never move beyond the limitations of his self is able to understand the significance of both worthiness and worldly success.

The character of Henchard in this novel presents pathos, pity and fear. Henchard's 'flaw' is impulsiveness, unwarranted concern for self, or a willingness to violate essential morality. The plot contains at least four crucial demonstrations of this

²³ Thomas Hardy His life and works by Halliday F.E.

²⁴ Thomas Hardy His life and works by Halliday F.E.

flaw in action. The first of course, the sale of Susan, which reverberates more upon Henchard than upon Susan, who in her ignorance thinks initially that her being passed from one man to another is legitimate. This violation is central in the background of the major plot of the novel, providing an indication of Henchard's character behind the choices that justify his destruction.

When the novel begins, Henchard is at his high point, when he is mayor. During the banquets of the Corporation, Henchard turns aside human suffering in the form of the complaint about his 'grewed wheat', thus marking himself as unworthy of his position, not to mention hinting at some degree of incompetence in his business. These are only matters of culpability; a more critical violation of humane assumptions occurs when in 'mortifying the flesh' of Abel Whittle, he offends against another's self-respect and sense of decency and against fairness, offences not offset by Henchard's kindness to Abel's mother. A third marked demonstration of Henchard's flaw stems from his jealousy of Farfrae, when he forces Lucetta to agree to marry him.

Thus The Mayor of Casterbridge novel's plot reveals:

"the consequences on a non-moral level of a quality of character, a condition of existence Henchard cannot evade. Even up till the end of the novel, although his character passed through different turning points, yet it has not changed altogether, at least at essential level. He is still subject to impulse, and still willing to sacrifice other people during an impulsive moment. Indeed, despite all the experiences he has gone through in the novel, Henchard's fourth violation of human sanctity is prototypical. His impulsive lie to Newson leads to the separation of a parent and child, the identical result of his first violation, the sale of Susan. Trapped by his own character, and by his inability to compromise - which is, appropriately, also the sign of his tragic worth and stature - and fully aware of the heinousness and indefensibility of his deed, and now aware of the chimerical quality of the success that another great expenditure of energy could win for him, Henchard withdraws in the face of his fear that he has forfeited Elizabeth-Jane's love, the last sole good he was able to acknowledge."²⁵

²⁵

Taken from Notes on Introduction of The Mayor of Casterbridge. Edited with an introduction by Dale Kramer on page 29.

However, although we may have much sympathy for Henchard, we must also acknowledge the fact that he is responsible for bringing the fitting destruction upon himself. He has challenged the elements that operate within the self, the social body, and the universe of nature; as a consequence he recognises there is no place for him in life as it is; there is no way he can become part of the Newson-Farfrae-Elizabeth Jane family group. In one sense, perhaps, he dies unnecessarily defiant, but the only course tolerable to him is to allow the natural elemental operation of bodily needs and of spiritual deprivation to remove him from the pain of existence. The final tragic irony is that his death is both reward and self-punishment.

A few years after writing The Mayor of Casterbridge Hardy copied into one of his note books a sentence from Schopenhauer expressing a sentiment that is perfectly illustrated by what he had done in the concluding pages of the novel: "Only when intellect rises to the point where the vanity of all effort is manifest, and the will proceeds to an act of self-annulment, is the drama tragic in the true sense".²⁶ This may be the best evaluation yet made of the self-rejecting tragedy of Henchard's end.

²⁶ Literary Notebooks, II, Item 29.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JUDE THE OBSCURE AND TRAGEDY

Before we come to look closely at Jude, we must glance first at Hardy's early work. 'Desperate Remedies' is Hardy's first published novel that is worth considering. Later on, he devoted himself to the publications of 'A Pair of Blue Eyes', 'Far From the Madding Crowd', 'Return of the Native', 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' etc. In all these novels we can find Hardy as an artist, a poet and a reliable craftsman who develops and constructs his story with skill and workmanship:

"On reading Return of the Native one thinks instinctively in terms of Greek tragedy and Aristotle's analysis of Plot, with its reversal of fortune and recognition scene of the tragic incident as one that occurs between those who are dear to one another. And there is a classical concentration, a Unity, indeed by the constant background of the health and correspondence of the seasons to the acts of a tragedy, the final catastrophe taking place exactly a year and a day after the opening twilight scene, the placid pool where Eustacia and Wildeve met becoming the roaring weir that drown them. That Hardy was thinking in terms of Greek tragedy seems clear from his allusions to Aeschylus, Prometheus and Oedipus, but like Shakespeare he was essentially a romantic, and he seasoned tragedy with the comic relief of another rustic, unclassical, chorus: 'For my part, said Timothy Fairway, 'I like a good hearty funeral as well as anything.'²⁷

While discussing Hardy and his views F.B. Pinion states in his book Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought that Hardy was not only a keen observer of human nature, and especially of the female temperament; he was highly intelligent and advanced in modern philosophy, and, after having absorbed much of the best of English poetry, had begun to find imaginative correlatives for his thoughts on life. (Chapter IV). Probably no other novel by Hardy is strewn with as many quotations from so many poets: they include

²⁷

Thomas Hardy, His life and work by F E Halliday, page 104.

Virgil, Terence, and Horace; Dante; Shakespeare and Thomas Watson, Milton, Collins and Gray, Thomas Moore, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly, Browning, Tennyson, Rossetti, and Whitman. By doing so Hardy leaves an everlasting impression on the minds of readers.

Thomas Hardy has portrayed in his novels the areas of Dorchester where he lived for the greater part of his life. An architect by profession, Hardy gave a design to his novels that was architectural, employing each circumstance in the narrative to one accumulated effect. The final impression was one of a malign Fate functioning in men's lives, corrupting their possibilities of happiness and bringing them towards tragedy, while this intuition about life did not harden into philosophy but it was so persistent that it was known as doctrine. His intellect contributed to it in revolting against the optimism of 19th century materialism. He observed life as cruel and purposeless for most of the people. Therefore, he felt sympathy and pity for the sufferers of Destiny, and it is a compassion that extends from man to the earthworms, and the diseased leaves of the trees. Such a conception gave a high seriousness to his novels which very few his contemporaries possessed. It was as if a scene of Greek tragedy was being played out among his Wessex rustics. He gave his rustic characters a high passion and noble and tragic proportion to make them sublime in his novels.

Hardy's novels appealed to successive generations for having novelty in them as he possessed varied gifts. First, he had supremely the gift of inventing lively incidents through which his story could move. He had overwhelming patience in displaying through incident the gradual interplay of his characters. His knowledge of country life made clear details in his stories, coloured and attractive in themselves apart from their importance in the structure of his theme.

"In *Tess* and *Jude The Obscure*, he brought the novel to the dignity of high tragedy in England. Nature which seemed Wordsworth and other romantics stimulating, appeared to Hardy's characters as cruel and relentless. Simultaneously, his kindest characters are those who have lived away from the towns in a quiet rural life, refusing to challenge the wrathful spirits which play such havoc with life. His position as a novelist is difficult to assess with certainty. As first he was condemned as a 'second rate romantic', and in year of his death he was elevated into one of the greatest figures of English literature. The first view is ill-informed and the second may well be excessive, but the Sincerity and Courage and the successful patience of his art leave him a great figure in English fiction. In world war of 1914-18 he was read with pleasure as one who had the courage to portray life with grimness that it possessed, and in portraying it not to lose pity. Often in times of stress Hardy's art will function in a similar way and so enter into the permanent tradition of English literature."²⁸

Hardy was also influenced by the teachings of Darwin and biological scientists, and this influence is found in an even more open way in the work of his prominent contemporary Samuel Butler.

Jude The Obscure

As I have mentioned earlier, this is the last publication of Thomas Hardy as far his authentic series of novels is concerned. It is the story of a young boy who wants to follow the example of his teacher who leaves Marygreen for Christminster to take his university degree. Jude is brought up under the care and vigilance of his great aunt. He is very sensitive. Thus, he works very hard at his studies and tries to provide the means to support himself at the university. He eventually comes across Arabella Donn and marries her but this marriage does not prove to be fruitful any longer because it ends when Arabella chooses to desert him and decides to leave for Australia with her family after having developed certain disputes among them. Similarly, if we advance with the

²⁸

A short history of English literature by Ifor Evans page 261.

development of the story of this novel we find traces of the huge sufferings of Jude right from the very beginning. He comes to forefront from an ordinary family, suffers painfully during his entire role in the novel and thus catches the attention of the readers. As time passes by, circumstances push him to re-marry his old wife Arabella who willingly returns to him after a long time. But he does not live longer to see the immense pleasure of his life and he bids farewell to the world for his heavenly abode.

If we examine Hardy's "Jude The Obscure", we will find that it is a psychological novel and one of the problems in dealing with both Jude and Sue is that they are not quite what they appear to be. Jude has great merits, he teaches himself theology and the classics and he is a good workman, but he has alarming weaknesses, the greatest of which is that of ignoring that which he does not wish to see. He has ample warning, from her story of the undergraduate, of Sue's true nature, yet he persists in thinking of her as a sexual partner. There is plenty of evidence of her religious inconsistency, yet he chooses to ignore this. On account of all this, he is regarded as an idealist and a dreamer.

The events and incidents described in this novel constitute a tragic blend especially in the treatment of characterisation. There are several situations in the novel where we strongly feel pathos and sympathy for the character. In the beginning of the novel, and in spite of Jude's hard work, he is punished for deserting his duties, as a result of which he is dismissed from his job. This shows the hard luck attached to his character from the early years of his life, so much so that he remains constantly under dark clouds till the end.

The companionship of Jude and Sue as illustrated over the pages of the text is commendable and notable because these characters serve as axle of the plot. F E Halliday has described their affiliation with great concern. According to him:

"There was such complete understanding between Jude and Sue that they seemed almost to be two parts of a single whole, able to communicate without speech, merely by glance and movement. Yet, when they met they were very different in some of their ideas. Jude was a devout Christian, with a reverence for medievalism, Gothic cathedrals, and all that Christminster stood for; but Sue would rather sit in a railway station than in a Cathedral. 'The Cathedral was a very good place four or five centuries ago; but it is played out now I am not modern either. I am more ancient than medievalism.' Sue was pre-Christian, a pagan who bought and hid statues of Venus and Appolo from the eyes of her ecclesiastical employers, a non conformer and she quoted J.S. Mill: 'She or he "who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the ape like one of imitation."' ²⁹

And this is what Jude is really about. The novel is a tragedy of two Simpletons who think they can defy Society by their refusal to conform to the accepted view of marriage.

It is Sue's refusal to conform that brings disaster, and the disaster breaks her. She leaves Jude to be re-married to Phillotson. But Jude, taught by Sue, has come to despise convention as much as she once did, and adversity only strengthens his resistance. Although desperately ill, he goes from Christminster to see her at Marygreen, where he pleads with her in the church. The last meeting of Jude and Sue is too near despair to rouse the felling of exaltation that is a quality of the greatest tragedy. In fact, the accidental behaviour of Jude has put Sue in despair. Although Jude is responsible, nevertheless to my mind he does what his character demands. This we can say is the narrative quality of Thomas Hardy.

In brief, Hardy was a provincial, a countryman. He is sensitive, intelligent and finely organised in the real sense of human being. The only characters in Hardy who need no fear of fall are those who are already down; those who live close to earth

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Thomas Hardy, His Life and Work by F E Halliday page 168-69.

without aspirations to rise. Hardy's view of life was cosmic. His tragic novels exist on two planes, design and plot. Despite his training as an architect, he had a wide knowledge of philosophy, literature and science. He was fortunate for his art in being born just as an age was ending. Actually, he was painfully conscious of the modern world and he looked back to the past and summed up in his fiction a life that was dying when he was a child, a life cut off from the mainstream of national life, more primitive, more pagan. His characters stand in relation to other things, the weather, the seasons, a traditional craft. He sees his characters much advanced but intellectually, Hardy was very much an advanced man of his time. The type of life he portrays in his characters is a life of tragedy to which he quietly agreed. Hardy rises to tragedy and his tragedy is an arraignment of the nature of the universe as he saw it.

CHAPTER NINE

COMPARISON OF HARDY AND SHAKESPEARE

Protagonists of Shakespeare and Hardy:

Shakespeare wrote four great tragedies namely, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth. In addition to them, he wrote a few early plays that contained tragic characteristics. Romeo and Juliet had affiliation with the four tragedies. Richard II and Richard III also anticipated the tragedies proper. The main four tragedies have much in common although each has its own unquestionable uniqueness. Their heroes or protagonists are very similar. His tragic heroes have a family likeness. They exhibit certain common characteristics - impulsiveness, want of self possession and self control in words and deeds, lack of balance, sudden shiftings of determination, bitter melancholy fits, a tendency to outrageous railings and cursings.

According to Dr. Bradley, Shakespearean tragedy is the story of the suffering and death of a great man of exceptional suffering. It ends in the most unfortunate death of a king among men, who with many virtues has one flaw, one weakness, sometimes the outcome of positive virtue, which for him proves fatal and, in conjunction with his peculiar circumstances, brings about his doom. But in his love tragedies, Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra, the heroine is as much the centre of action as the hero. In general, the hero, Shakespeare stresses, must be great both in position and character. Hamlet is the prince of Denmark and Lear is a king. Macbeth is a great General who later becomes a king. Othello is the General of Venice who has rendered great service to the state and whom the state exalts high. If Shakespeare wishes his heroes to be kings, he does for dramatic interest. The downfall of a prince or a General is a national calamity. It exercises tremendous influence on the fortunes of a whole nation. It has

far-reaching consequences. It is therefore, a more befitting subject for tragedy than the story of an ordinary man. Accordingly to Bradley, the sufferings of despised love are not the same in a peasant or a labourer. Shakespeare's views regarding protagonists are therefore quite appropriate.

It has been found that Shakespeare's hero is not merely a person of high degree, but he is always an extraordinary man. Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear and Othello are constituted on a grand scale. But these great men have somewhere a flaw in their character. On the whole, they are men with a native grandeur of mind that is in some ways a handicap to them. In most cases their defect is not a defect at all. It is the reverse side of merit. The defect comes to be a defect only in the circumstances in which they are placed. Under other circumstances, it will not be a defect at all. Keeping this in view, Hamlet's fault is not a defect at all. He is slow to act, given too much to brooding and too fine a soul to remain untouched by the grossness and rottenness of things around. The result is that he is moody and temperamental. If it is considered seriously, it is no fault that may be considered in any man. It may be a symptom. But this flaw leads to Hamlet's tragedy. His alleged defect becomes tragic hamartia under his circumstances. If Hamlet had found himself in Othello's position, there would have been no tragedy for him. If Othello were in Hamlet's position, he would easily have escaped the tragedy. Hamlet meets with his doom because of his procrastination. He, unfortunately, cannot be swift in action. So, the tragic flaw is fatal not by itself, but on account of the circumstances in which the hero finds himself. It must be considered that the flaw is a fatal gift and carries with it a touch of greatness.³⁰

³⁰ Argument is based on Sen Gupta S.C. in Aspects of Shakespearean Tragedy OUP, Calcutta, India, 1977.

From this discussion, it is apparent that the hero contributes to his tragedy. If the matter is further probed, it is quite clear that he is not responsible for it. Hence, to put it more clearly, we can say that Shakespearean tragedy is the joint product of the hero's fault and his circumstances. It is a common estimation of Shakespearean tragedy that character is destiny because the hero has an inherent drawback in his life. Bradley regards it as the exaggeration of a vital truth. However, the role of circumstance in Shakespeare's hero is as important as that of character. It has been shown that the tragic trait proves fatal to the hero under his own circumstances. Apart from circumstances, chance or accident plays its appreciable part to bring about the tragedy. It is an accident that Duncan visits Macbeth's castle at an equally fatal hour. Edgar in Lear comes a moment too late to save fate. Shakespeare, being a dramatist, is unable to express his sentiments. But his characters are the mouthpiece for his deep-rooted philosophy of necessity, circumstances, chance or accident. In Hamlet there are such sentiments as:

- (i) "There is a divinity that shapes our end
Rough-hew then how you will....." (Act V.2:10-11)
- (ii) "Our thoughts are ours,
Their ends are none of our own....." (Act III.2:223)

Again in Lear the philosophy of fate is emphatically expressed:

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport." (Act IV.1:37-38)

The belief that there is anything arbitrary and irrational in human experience is thus fundamental in Shakespeare's thought. He perceives that both, each in its own place, have in them something of truth; that both correspond to indubitable realities of life. Shakespeare was familiar with both conceptions, allowed both to affect the development of his drama and to colour the utterance of his characters. This preserved in his greatest works a certain balance between them so that each was complementary to the other.

Hardy's characters, however, are drawn from the most common place walks of life. Fieldings and Dickens had initiated interest in the lower classes of society before him. Aristotle laid down the dictum that was followed later on by Shakespeare that the hero, specifically the tragic hero, must be a man of high rank. This theory was followed by almost all notable dramatists and novelists. But the central figures in the works of Hardy are taken from the rank and file. They are not important people nor do they represent high society. Kings, Princes, Generals and leaders of high repute are absent from the pages of Hardy's novels. For example, Gabriel Oak is a poor shepherd. Sue is a teacher of an elementary school. Jude Fawley is a stone-mason. Henchard, the hero of the Mayor of Casterbridge, is a tramping hay trusser. Tess, the heroine of Hardy's greatest novel, is a milk maid and a general farmhand. She is the daughter of a haggler. She is driven from place to place by the necessity of making both ends meet. In this respect, Hardy is known as a democratic novelist. He is a writer of the people and for the people. He has real popular sympathy that is not noticeable, for example, in Scott and Thackeray. He is the spokesman of the masses. He takes delight in kinship with ordinary folk. But he is not satisfied merely with the depiction of the exterior of his creatures. He goes deep into human nature to exalt his tragic novels. To him there is much depth and intensity and romance in the low class people and women who pre-eminently occupying the main role in his novels. His schoolmaster, hay trusser, shepherd, stone-mason and milk maid are endowed with souls. Hardy dives into these souls and brings out their beauty. Splendour and grandeur. This exaltation of human souls has put Hardy on an equal footing with Shakespeare. He was the first to declare that the average man possesses subtlety and mystery that is immeasurable and is capable of flights to the Himalayas. It is a remarkable achievement that has given him an extraordinary position among the great tragic artists. It is his peculiar grace. It is

perhaps his supreme achievement to have gone down among the unnoticed, forgotten, myriads of dull, prosaic, average human beings and discovered here and there among them the mysterious interesting and spiritual adventures that are as great as the queens and emperors of Shakespeare. He has gone some way to disprove the assertion that Hamlet's emotions cannot be felt by a plumber. He has visualised over and over Carlyle's dream of the infinite shoe-black. Thus Hardy does not follow in his tragedies the Aristotelian principle of the high lineage of the hero. He invests these humble beings with a soul and in their sufferings these characters are as grand and as noble as are the tragic characters of Hamlet and King Lear.

In the tragedies of Shakespeare, character is destiny. But in the tragedies of Hardy, character is fate. His characters are not the architects of their fortune and will. They cannot influence their own action. For them, everything is determined. But even then they have their tragic flaws, just like the tragic characters of Shakespeare. For example, Henchard is over-impulsive, Jude is over-ambitious, Tess is too innocent, Eustacia wants to be loved to madness, and Clynn has his impractical idealism. This hamartia is essentially an internal evil symbolised by instincts and emotions. Firstly, there is sexual desire that is as blind a desire as the "will to live." Secondly, there is an ambition that is bringing the down fall of the hero. These internal evils are aggravated by external environments that may be called Prime Cause, Environments, Society and modern scientific progress. These things appear distinctly as villains in the novels of Hardy. Thus, the influence of heredity and environment goes as long way in determining the behaviour and character of a man.

Hardy is unable to depict upper class society. He is primarily a writer and a devotee of the life in the country and of its residents. These humble people in their tragic moments are more real and vital. He wittingly eschews selected people from the

upper class society who inhabit the world of his predecessors and successors. Although there is a tragic grandeur and a dignity of man in the souls of his heroes, yet they are inferior to those of Shakespeare. Hardy's characters follow a predetermined course of action. They begin their careers with Hardy's assumption that since man has taken birth on this earth, he must suffer. They are not the masters of their own will. They are helpless puppets in the hands of cruel chance, destiny and immanent will. There is no tragic flaw in their characters in the real sense of the word. Although, Henchard sells his wife and Tess is seduced, there is not any sense of hamartia in their lives, because they are not of their own making. It is Henchard's temporary drunkenness and Tess' temporary sleep. Besides, these characters sincerely repent for their actions and solemnly vow that they will not repeat such acts in the course of their existence. Their destiny is their character. Thus, if we compare them with Shakespearean heroes, they fail to exalt our emotions in the same manner, because the latter are endowed with extraordinary qualities except one tragic flaw that causes destruction. Hardy has endeavoured to exalt his heroes and heroines by bestowing upon them poetical qualities. They are the visions of his imagination. They are great because of their miseries, sorrows and insurmountable hardships. The nucleus of their suffering is not the suffering of the body but the suffering of the soul. It is this that makes these characters grand, sublime and noble. When we view these characters in the light of this nobility, splendour and grandeur, we realise that they are neither individuals nor types, they transcend such classifications and become universal figures. In fact, Hardy aims at depicting the tragedy of the whole human race - of all its men and women. Each character comprehends within itself the whole of human nature which is one and indivisible. Hardy's tragic characters share universality. Although they are not truly Shakespearean his achievement is remarkable and considerable.

Shakespearean heroes are wonderful. They confront impossible situations. They find themselves at bay. They stand aghast because they are perplexed to the extreme with their one-sidedness. They have an unhappy knack of throwing their whole being into one thing, they can only overfill their cup of misery and make confusion more confounded. Shakespeare has made his tragic art magnificent by inner conflict. The sufferings are not pre-determined. The inner conflict is the distinctive feature of Shakespeare's tragedy. There is the external conflict i.e. between two individuals or groups. In addition to it, there is in Shakespeare the spectacle of a soul divided against itself. A heart is torn by conflicting impulses. The sight of the schism in the soul, the rift, the split in it adds to the poignancy of the tragic impression. In Othello, there is strife within. The same is the case in Hamlet, Macbeth and Lear. The hero is convulsed by his impulses and moods. We do not find Hamlet really trying to decide between two impulses or to stifle an impulse so that another may get scope; we find him hesitating, heart searching, self-lacerating and pulling himself up for a moment with a sharp sense of remorse and lapsing back into it again - doing a thousand things one after another, but never seriously attempting to contend with unwanted moods or impulses. Witness also Macbeth. Does he ever fight his own mind? In one soliloquy, he considers the pros and cons of the contemplated murder and inclines in favour of abandoning the idea. Next, he has to meet opposition from without. He shrinks, his wife goads him on. It is the meeting of the dove and the eagle (the he-dove and the she-eagle); there is hovering, a swoop, and then the determined beak and the relentless talons do their work. Macbeth is finally driven by an irresistible impulse, dragged into crime by some motive which is too subtle for him to fathom and too powerful for him to resist. At any rate one never finds him attempting to resist. As a consequence of his crime, his mind, he finds, is full

of scorpions that continually sting him. But to be stung is not the same thing as going through an inner conflict.

The essence of Hardy's tragedy is conflict or struggle. This conflict is inner as well as outward. The inner conflict is concerned with the heart of the hero or heroine between two contending ideas. The outward conflict deals with external pressure or compulsion that takes the form of coincidence or the irony of circumstances. Two types of conflict are quite apparent in Hardy's tragedies. His tragic novels are full of activity. His characters are strong individuals. His heroes and heroines offer stubborn and unyielding resistance against malicious human and natural courses. They try to escape from the net of hardships around them. Henchard, Tess and Jude have to encounter the most pitiless destiny but they are not abject or low because they are able to offer grand and dignified resistance. Hardy's tragedies do not exhibit defeat, remorsefulness and despondency, but the will of hero is crushed and paralysed which, in the end, shows his dignity and grandeur because of the endurance of pain and sufferings. There is, in the novels, an element of noble and sublime toleration of pain that rends the heart and is the source of much that is best in tragedy. The inner conflict further reveals the moral forces of the soul that is accompanied by physical contradictions. Thus, his heroes and heroines are not depressing. They are a cause of pleasurable relief. They have the element of resistance of a very high, noble and dignified character. Although we forecast that a towering and laudable impulse and desire is doomed to be crushed, yet we greatly relish and enjoy the bracing quality of its assertion.³¹

³¹ Argument based on Smith Anne in The Novels of Thomas Hardy, Clarke, Dole & Brendan Ltd, London 1979.

CHAPTER TEN

UNIVERSAL APPROACH IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THOMAS HARDY

The Greeks and Elizabethans made their heroines persons of high rank. They introduced a sense of the supernatural in human life in several ways. Thus, we find ghosts and witches in Shakespeare's tragedies. Shakespeare also used chance, which is the representation of abnormal conditions of mind such as insanity, somnambulism and so on, to create this tragic effect. He also had recourse to the devices of tragic irony and pathetic fallacy by making external nature reflect human emotion. In other words, the narrow world of the story is lifted to the higher, wilder, and vaster world in a tragic art which may be called universal.

Shakespeare's universality is admittedly comprehensive, vast and magnificent, as Bradley has noted:

"Shakespeare's work alone can be said to possess the organic strength and infinite variety, the throbbingfulness, vital complexity and breathing truth of Nature herself. In points of artistic resource and technical ability - such as copious and expressive diction, freshness and pregnancy of verbal combination, richly modulated verse and structural skill in the handling of incident and action - Shakespeare's supremacy is indeed sufficiently assured. But, after all, it is the course, the spirit and substance of his work, his power of piercing to the hidden centres of character of touching the deepest springs of impulse and passion, out of which are the issues of life, and of evolving those issues dramatically with a flawless strength, subtlety and truth, which raises him so immensely above and beyond not only the best of the playwrights who went before him, but the whole line of illustrious that came after him. It is Shakespeare's unique distinction that he has an absolute command over all the complexities of thought and feeling that prompt to action and bring out the dividing lines of character. He sweeps with the hand of a master the whole gamut of human experience, from the lowest note to the very top of its compass, from the sportive childish treble of Mamilius, and the pleading boyish tones of Prince Arthur to the spectre-haunted terrors of

Macbeth, the tropical passion of Othello, the agonised sense and tortured spirit of Hamlet, the sustained elemental grandeur, the Titanic force, the utterly tragical pathos of King Lear.³²

Shakespeare's plots are unique but they have the striking point of universality. Among his four great and deep tragedies, King Lear is remarkable for its titanic effect. Like the others, its course and catastrophe emerge from the wickedness, folly and human error of the central figure. It reaches beyond human fates and suggests the struggle of man with the gigantic problems of the universe. If we contemplate it, we don't confine our imagination itself to geographical regions. We encounter a world of darkness and light side by side. There is a struggle between good and evil within which man is engulfed. He wrestles helplessly, heroically and breathlessly. The great voice of Lear is the symbol of humanity itself. He is changed like Prometheus and tries to encounter the malignant fate and other powers which are working behind the universe. Thus, the scene takes on a cosmic amplitude, magnitude and significance.

In relation to universality, we find that Hardy is a modern, through and through. He is unwilling to adopt devices employed by the Greeks and the Elizabethans. Science has forbidden the use of the supernatural but symbolism has taken its place. The hero is identified with a class or a faith. Modern philosophy concentrates on idealisation and embodiment of abstract or collective forces in concrete artistic form. Hardy has also adopted the same devices for manifesting the tragic traits of his characters. His universe is symbolic, representing the deepest and loftiest concepts of life which are based upon tragic issues. Modern writers endeavour to fix on some one subject outside the characters themselves and to treat that object as a force, or symbol of force.

Thomas Hardy has made use of various contrivances, methods and techniques for giving an air of universality to his tragedies. Firstly, his heroes and heroines are not

³² Shakespearean Tragedy by A.C. Bradley from lectures on construction in Shakespeare's tragedies.

persons of very high fame and flourishing prosperity. They are common folk. But they are endowed with extra-ordinary qualities so that they seem different from others. Thus, they assume heroic grandeur although they appear to be very common. For example, Clym is described as the most important man in Egdon. He is no less than the apostle Paul. The grandeur of Eustacia, although she is not queen, conveys us the air of universality. Her beauty is so great, so grand, that the novelist adopts a rich diction to convey the halo around her head. She is the embodiment of beauty. As Hardy describes in his novels:

"Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman.

She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy; without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow: it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow.

Return of the Native Ch VII page 118.

Similarly, the character of Henchard is constructed on too large a scale. His pride is great, although he is endowed with energy. He is a man of his word so much so that once he is determined, he can shun all drinking for 21 years. He is austere to the core. He hates frolicsome levity and frivolity. He is temperamentally a woman-hater. The catastrophe of such a figure cannot but be full of tragic grandeur. Thus an ordinary person has been presented as a symbol of the loftiest elements of the universe. He is great in his hours of darkest misery. Misery has taught him nothing more than the defiant endurance of it. He becomes an old hand at bearing anguish in silence.

The other way of producing universality is Hardy's use of the marvellous. The setting of Tess' disclosure to Clare of her past and the death-bed scene in Jude The Obscure are unique examples. The atmospheric influences of nature, such as Egdon

Heath, are one way of using the marvellous. His characters compel the powers of nature into their service. This is particularly noticeable in The Return of the Native. When Eustacia and Clym Yeobright meet on Egdon, the signal for their trysting hour is nothing less than a lunar eclipse. The lesser glory of the relationship between Eustacia and Wildeve is measured by the fact that the signal for their meetings is the splash of a 'hop-frog' in a pool or a moth that flies into the flame of a candle.

Catharsis in Shakespeare and Hardy

According to Aristotle, the supreme function of a tragedy is to arouse pity and terror. It endeavours to exalt, purify and ennoble our feelings and emotions by arousing pity and terror in us. All great tragedies of Shakespeare are concerned with pain, misery, death and vice. But the feeling of depression never takes possession of us in the long run. The hero suffers because of unknown forces and his tragic hamartia. But at the end, his death conveys a sense of nobility and greatness of soul. He convinces us of the greatness of human nature. We brood, "what a piece of work is man!" Our life is full of afflictions and miseries. The life of Brutus is a glorious example in Julius Caesar. We observe such spectacles in our every day life. Thus, tragedy does not arouse in us fantastic and ridiculous notions. It develops in us feelings of pity, awe and fear. We no longer remain hard hearted and cruel by witnessing the sufferings and misfortunes of others. A tragedy signifies that no one, not even the richest and the greatest, is immune to these. Fate overtakes all - the rich and the poor, the great and the small. It is, therefore, a great folly to laugh at the sufferings, afflictions and miseries of others. Because of the theory of purgation, our pride is humbled. We come to realise the helplessness of human nature in the face of overwhelming forces. We also cherish in our mind that some day we may fall a victim to the inevitable and irresistible forces

of circumstances and determinism. Secondly, tragedy arouses in us feelings of terror. We are filled with terror when we observe the greatest kings and princes coming to grief and falling from their glorious pedestals. We cry in horror: "what a fall!" We are taken unaware. Our blood freezes in our veins. The ground slips away from our feet. We stand speechless before the terrible catastrophe that destroys all the characters engulfed in it. At that moment, we realise the powerlessness of man and the potency of the towering deities that determine our destinies. We come to the conclusion that suffering is the badge of man. We suffer with godlike fortitude and divine patience. It is here that the glory of life rises into us. It is the distinctive characteristic of tragedy. A tragedy gives us a pleasurable relief, a mental medicine which always stands us in good stead, amidst the ills and afflictions which involve us in the universe. Shakespeare has achieved a great success by arousing in his tragedies pity and terror which effects the Catharsis of kindred emotions.

Thomas Hardy offers the catharsis of emotions. His tragic art creates a relief from complexes, inhibitions and repressions. He himself found a great relief in the present world by applying the theory of Catharsis in his tragic novels. His biographer Mrs Evelyn Hardy has pointed out that artistic creation gave him relief because he was leading a dismal life. According to her, tragedy satisfied all melancholia, discouragement as well as intellectual integrity in his nature. While we read his novels, we feel that he has successfully applied the concept of Catharsis. For example Hardy states in The Return of the Native:

"And as he walked further and further from the charmed atmosphere of his Olympian girl his face grew sad with a new sort of sadness. A perception of the dilemma in which his love had placed him came back in full force."

Return of the Native : Book Third page 259

At the end of his novels, there is no depression and pessimism. The reader feels resignation, calmness and a sense of satisfaction. At the end of The Mayor of Casterbridge, we feel unbroken tranquillity after turmoil, agitation and convulsion.

If we look into Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge in this perspective, we find that Henchard, the hero of this novel, is in many respects a powerful man who however experiences himself as absolutely powerless. One senses that a life comprising only endless responses to the endless demands of survival has built up in Henchard an overwhelming need to initiate. As he grows less and less able to tolerate his present limitations, his mind turns to ridding himself of them - the most obvious to him being his obligation to support a wife and daughter. If only he weren't tied in this particular way, he reasons to himself, if only he were a free man again, he would be able to accomplish anything he wanted: he would 'challenge England' in the fodder business, he would know nothing but success, he would be worth a thousand pounds. It is a dream of total mastery over the situation that currently defeats him; instead of sweating and scraping to obtain enough food for three months, he will become a corn merchant, an emperor of food. At the moment that Henchard conjures up the image of this triumphant change of life, he hears the voice of the auctioneer outside inviting bids on the last of the horses. None might expect of the man who has been complaining so bitterly of his helplessness, his ties, his inability to control his own destiny, that he would identify with the creature being sold, but his mind has at some stage made a sudden imaginative leap, and he identifies with the seller who cannot only escape the restrictions of destiny by virtue of his 'freedom' but can bring about those restrictions on others. Henchard can escape his disposal at the hands of fate and simultaneously play at being himself the disposer. Susan is his problem and his restriction, and instead of

suffering her he can get rid of her. Thus, he goes from victim to master in one daring stroke, as Juliet Grindle has noted:

"One of the reasons that Henchard stands out from among other characters in The Mayor of Casterbridge, and indeed from among all Hardy's characters, is that he approaches the acquisition of power not only with a single minded energy but also with an extraordinary degree of faith that power solves the problems. His selling of Susan and Susan's acquiescence in being sold, seems to expose their relationship itself as one in which power is the central issue. At the moment of sale, Henchard believes he has power over Susan in the same sense that he has power over five guineas: both are sequentially, his to exchange, and he can only realise the power by effecting the transactions."³³

Henchard's commitment to controlling himself gives us some idea of the strength of the man whose story we are about to learn. The narrative leap of over nineteen years in which Henchard achieves all his ambitions and more, has something of the effect of a magic wand in response to his wish. Suddenly, there is Henchard transformed into The Mayor of Casterbridge with all the wealth and power he could reasonably want. All these incidents and several others relating to Henchard's life produce 'pity and fear'. Although Hardy was quite unique in his style yet he is greatly compared with Shakespeare in this aspect which is very remarkable.

Again coming to Hardy's other masterpiece Tess of the D'Urbervilles, we also find that it is the story of an individual victimised by the unfair standards of morality that condemn in his woman behaviour condoned in a man:

"Hardy universalises Tess by means of complex plot: in it she works out her destiny and, at the same time, moves through a series of events representing the failure of hope for the future, the failure of present happiness, the failure of both recent and ancient traditions. She experiences profound distress and temporary happiness; as each misfortune overcomes her, she hopes of consolation first in the future, and then in the present.

³³

The novels of Thomas Hardy edited by Anne Smith Chapter 5 'Compulsion and Choice in The Mayor of Casterbridge by Juliet M. Grindle page 92.

Later, she seeks comfort in the past, and finally in the remote past."³⁴

The story, the plot, the characters and the situations mentioned in this novel produce a peculiar effect on the minds of readers. Hardy has presented the character of Tess in a way as he sees his contemporary society. Thus, by presenting such characters, he has indirectly pointed out certain outstanding social evils, which he puts forth before the readers to acknowledge and appreciate. The distress, the misery, misfortune, trouble and weakness expressed in *Tess of D'Urbervilles* leave an everlasting impression on the minds of readers. All characters and incidents expressed in this novel bear ample evidence of Hardy's marvellous depiction of catharsis.

³⁴ The Novels of Thomas Hardy edited by Ann Smith chapter vi *Tess: The Pagan and Christian Traditions* by Rosemary L. Eakins Page 111.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONSTRUCTION OF SUB-PLOT IN THOMAS HARDY AND SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC CREATIONS

A sub-plot is essential to signify and magnify the main plot. The main emotions in the novels of Hardy and in the tragic dramas of Shakespeare are further emphasised by means of devices like a parallel plot or a sub plot. Sometimes, these devices are not used by the tragic artists. But every artist feels that it is necessary to give an idea of things outside the world of the main story. The audience or the reader can easily estimate the main tragic theme by the structure of the sub-plot. This aspect is usually furnished through Hardy's rustic characters. They open up a world of their own in his tragic novels, and yet are not wholly aloof from it. They act as its commentators giving at the same time a lot of information about the life-history and personality of the main characters. For these reasons they have been compared to the Greek chorus. They also provide a light side of life - wit and humour, shrewdness and impartiality. Their appearance in the novels is reassuring, it acts as tragic relief as well as a device to achieve universality.

Shakespeare effectively used the double plot. In King Lear, he interwove two plots very successfully. The underplot is brought in, not to complicate the story, but further to enhance the interest of the main plot. It makes for variety and extension of the story. Variety is due to the fact that the incidents and the circumstances of the two stories are different. The extension is marked in the drama because both are stories of infatuated fathers ruined by the unnatural children whom they trust and redeemed by the love of the children whom they have torn off from their bosoms. This repetition and variation of motives in tragic art at once affect the imagination. If the main characters,

Lear and Gloucester, of main and sub-plot respectively, are seen side by side, they emphasise the impressions concerned with tragedy. The son betrays and thirsts for the blood of the father; brother seeks the life of brother; sisters destroy each other through their common passion for a villain. In this manner, all the characters of the double plot impress the stupendous range and scope of tragedy.

Concept of Poetic Justice in Shakespeare's and Hardy's tragic works

Tragedy does not contain any belief or a definite faith in a moral order prevailing in the universe, although there is the feeling of nobility. In other words, complete poetic justice cannot be observed in it. A wicked hero like Macbeth has a heroic grandeur although his actions are abominable. In fact, poetic justice is not true to life. The bad cannot be always punished and the good cannot be always rewarded in a piece of art. Tragedy can be enjoyed if evil and good clash with each other and further it establishes the truth of a moral order.

Secondly, poetic justice is not essential because the grandeur and awe of tragedy would suffer if it were shown. Nobody is moved by this device. The class of good with good does not produce the sense of waste. This sense is more elevating if good suffers on account of bad. The hero seems partially villainous. This is done to reconcile us to some extent to the catastrophe that overtakes the hero. Thus, there is a partial poetic justice shown by both tragic artists.³⁵

Imagery and Diction in the works of Shakespeare and Hardy

Shakespeare has used scientific diction and imagery to make his tragic art perfect. The use of imagery in King Lear is entirely dramatic. It is to present the clear

³⁵

Idea taken from Shakespeare's Tragedy written by Edward Arnold - London, 1984.

picture of Lear's mind which has a tragic flaw. The appropriate diction and imagery are used to exhibit the wild, brute and savage nature of his elder daughters. King's surmountable hardships are displayed by their help. Finally, his spiritual redemption is properly presented by these devices. The following verses are quoted to reveal Shakespeare's use of diction and imagery for revealing the wide range, variety and interest of his tragedy:-

- (i) "When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers, suffers most i'the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind"
(Act III.6:100-104)
- (ii) "A most poor man made tame to fortune's blows,
Who, by the art of known and feeling forrows,
Am pregnant to good pity."
(Act IV.6:227-229)
- (iii) " Be better suited.
These weeds are memories of those worser hours."
(Act IV.7:7-9)
- (iv) "You do me wrong to take me out o'the grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
(Act IV.7:45-48)
- (v) "O, our life's sweetness,
That we the pain of death would hourly die
Rather than die at once"
(Act V.3:182-184)
- (vi) "The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
Shall never see so much nor live so long.
(Act V.3:321-324)

In Hamlet Shakespeare's style and diction is praiseworthy. Take any passage of the play and it will be found that the imagery, diction and rhythm are strictly adapted to character, psychology and dramatic purpose. The play's style is dictated by its shifting

emotions and moods. Metaphors are used everywhere in the play. Metaphorical diction may be said to be the life-blood of its poetry. It pervades the play like an atmosphere. We are conscious of the effect of imagery used in his plays. The following examples will reveal the greatness of Shakespeare's imagery in Hamlet;

- | | | |
|--------|---|-------------------|
| (i) | Frailty, thy name is woman. | (Act I.2:146) |
| (ii) | The time is out of joint. O, cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right! | (Act I.5:188-189) |
| (iii) | On Fortune's cap we are not the very button | (Act II.2:28) |
| (iv) | For there is nothing
either good or bad but thinking makes it so. | (Act II.2:250) |
| (v) | Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own. | (Act III.2:223) |
| (vi) | When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions | (Act IV.5:79-80) |
| (vii) | Forty thousand brothers
Could not with all their quantity of love
Make up my sum. | (Act V.1:266-68) |
| (viii) | And borrowing dulleth edge of husbandry. | (Act I.3:76) |

Hardy's beauty and style and diction is a palliative in the tragic art. In Elizabethan tragedies, tragic effect was achieved by means of verse and other poetical effects. Hardy has used prose in his tragedies. In order to achieve tragic grandeur, he has endeavoured to reach poetic heights. Thus, his style has poetical characteristics. For example, let us examine Hardy's novel The Return of the Native. The chapter 'Queen of Night' has entirely poetical effect. Moreover, he was a landscape artist. He had unified all the effects to achieve the desired end. He weaves literary quotations, references, and allusions profusely and harmoniously, to create poetic and emotional effects. He glides into metaphors and similes drawn from life and literature.

Tragic vision of Hardy and Shakespeare

Shakespeare's outlook on life changed as his career progressed. He depended upon experience and with its growth his views on life passed through a process of

evolution. His pen recorded the vibrations and stirrings of his own mind generated by the shocks of experience. That is why, in Shakespeare, we find sunshine along with squally weather, sober melancholy wedded to youthful mirth.

Hardy's views of life can be explained as determinism, fatalism, atheism etc. Although, his stories and plots reveal a lighter and idyllic life, yet he generally keeps his attitude to life consistently before him. From various experiences of his life, Hardy encountered the problem of sufferings and hardships in his life time, he only suffers due to evil in this world. According to him evil is 'internal' as well as external. Externally our environment, i.e. nature and society, is responsible for our suffering and sorrows, while internally, instincts, emotions and passions lead us to the tragic end.

Hardy's views of life become very dark. He writes in defence of his attitude to life. Hardy has also given a definition of tragedy that distinctly reveals his tragic view of life. According to him, a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual that unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out. He has expressed his views of tragedy in his novels. In Tess, he remarks:

Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice.

(Chapter XV page 150)

He narrates in the following passages in The Mayor of Casterbridge,

- I. "Misery taught him nothing more than defiant endurance of it. His wife was dead, and the first impulse for revenge died with the thought that she was beyond him. He looked out at the night as at a fiend. Henchard, like all his kind, was superstitious, and he could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him."

(Chapter 19 page 126-127)

- II. "When he had gone on to give details which a whole series of slight and unregarded incidents in her past life strangely corroborated; when, in short, she believed his story to be true, she became greatly agitated, and turning round to the table, flung her face upon it weeping."

(Chapter 19 page 123)

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

A tragedy is a painful mystery. Its essence is conflict, resulting in suffering and misery. Human failings and towering passions lead to the greatness of man. If man controls the sources of tragedy, no tragic situations will emerge. Tragedy occurs when the tragic events are uncontrollable and beyond human power. In this light, while summing up the discussion and commenting upon the writers understudy, we hold that a Shakespearean tragedy may be safely described as the story of a single character. The others are all eclipsed by the hero and play ancillary and contributory parts. His hero must be a person of high degree, a King Lear, Prince Hamlet, General of the Republic like Othello, a leader in the state like Brutus, Antony or Coriolanus. Shakespeare holds, by general acclamation, the foremost place in the world's literature and his overwhelming greatness renders it difficult to criticise. Shakespeare's greatness is also recorded as a perfect naturalness of his dialogue. He is a master of dramatic dialogue. All modes and formula by which anger hurry, irritation scorn, impatience, or excitement are expressed - these are as plentiful in Shakespeare's dialogue as in life itself.

Shakespeare shows unrivalled powers of expression. The beauty of words, the aptness and originality of phrases, the wealth of striking similes and metaphors, the felicities of language, the richness and sweetness of verse - these are found in his plays to an astonishing degree. He was an artist and concerned primarily not with postulating theories of life, but with the stuff of life itself. He deals with an inexhaustible drama of human life that is rather inexplicable in its character. His characters bear the stamp of Shakespeare's creative genius, the characteristic mark of his individuality. All his characters are men and women in flesh. They are full of aspirations and pursuits. They

do not always lead a rosy life. Sometimes they experience adversity, separation and disappointment.

Thomas Hardy's characters are mostly ordinary men and women living close to the soil. The individuality of some is sacrificed to Hardy's view of life but while he is, by more modern standards, not really deep in his psychological analysis, characters like Jude and Sue, Tess, Henchard and Eustacia Vye show considerable subtlety in interpretation. Hardy had supremely the gift of anecdote, the power of inventing lively incidents through which his story could move. He had patience in displaying through incidents the gradual interplay of his characters. His knowledge of country life made vivid the details in his stories. He sees and presents the humorous and attractive sides of his country people. The movement of Hardy's plots is often compared with that of the Greek tragedies. His outlook was tinged with revolutionary zeal because he was not typically Victorian in the mode of thinking. He was intellectually modern but technically he was conventional. He was deeply affected by new theories of scientific progress that totally annihilated the Biblical faith. He handled the current problems of the new age.³⁶

Thomas Hardy is one of the venerables of English fiction. He has added might and majesty, greatness and grandeur and breadth and depth to the English novel. He has contributed imperishable works to English literature. He treated the novel seriously, as a form of art that should offer not only a representation of human life but also an interpretation of it. Using the countryside as the background and simple, almost primitive, human beings as characters, Hardy presents a vast panorama of the tragedy of

³⁶ Argument based on Page Norman in Thomas Hardy Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London, Henley and Boston, 1977.

life. With natural scenes that form the philosophic and aesthetic bases of his novels, with characters that are heroic though not of cosmic importance, with violent crashes of tragic coincidence and with the back-drop curtain of pessimism constantly present, Hardy has given to the world fiction of unending interest and value. He missed the award of the nobel prize for literature, but he has not failed to become one of the immortals in the history of English novel.

Hardy has produced a text of epic grandeur possessing quintessential dramatic intensity in the spirit that is called as The Dynasts. It is an extraordinary architectural achievement; starting from a historical foundation, Hardy builds up a great universe, which comprehends every phase in human life. But there is a vital weakness in the play, which prevents up from believing completely in the universe Hardy has created for us. This weakness is the diction of the verse part of the play. The opening of the play is typical in its expression:

SHADE OF THE EARTH.
What of the Immanent Will and its designs?
SPIRIT OF THE YEARS
It works consciously, as heretofore,
Eternal artestries in circumstance,
Whose patterns, Wrought by rapt aesthetic rote,
Seem in themselves its single listless aim,
And not their consequence. (The Dynasts: Fore Scene)³⁷

In the light of detailed study, we find certain similarities in both writers. Both Hardy and Shakespeare are tragic artists to an excellent standard. Their dissimilarities are due to the fact that they were living in different ages. Hardy is a modernist and basically a novelist. The modern age has spiritual values quite different from those of the Elizabethan age. Hardy's tragic art has become a target of criticism because he has used repeatedly, used chance and coincidence that has spoiled the beauty of his tragic

³⁷ The Dynasts by Thomas Hardy, page I.

plot. Therefore, it sometimes appears as if his art is unnatural but this so-called drawback can easily be ignored because of his achievements. His sense of humour, his rich poetical style, his well knit plots, his thought provoking men and women of the region of Wessex and his brilliant characterisation have made his tragic art perfect and consummate. Shakespeare's tragic method is quite different from Hardy's. His aim is to select from history or fiction a theme that lends itself to the dramatic treatment of some major passion. He further develops this theme in a series of situations that throw his characters into contrast with others and into conflict with circumstances. He makes his protagonists predominantly noble figures, both in nature and in rank, while at the same time endowing them with some bias and weakness that is so enhanced by the special circumstances in which an ironic fate places them as to prove their undoing. In their fall, there is an inherent sense of loss, of the waste of so much that is fine and excellent in the world. But the harshness and abhorrence of this loss is mitigated by the willingness with which they embrace a death that brings release, calmness, tranquillity and resignation. It appears that they learnt wisdom by this catastrophe. They leave the world better than they found it. Spiritually, they are victorious, although physically vanquished. They emerge from the hard and fiery ordeal of internal and external torment and torture. In the end, they are purified and refined. Lear in Act I is wild, rude and defiant. But Lear in Act V is redeemed, docile, humble and tranquil. Whatever Shakespeare has achieved in poetic tragedies, Hardy has endeavoured to attain in the poetic prose of his novels.

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