

Depiction of Human Struggles in the Chosen Plays of Modern Dramatists

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Abstract: The works of the modern dramatist consist of reduced forms of drama that depict declining human capacities. The primary focus of their works revolved around the revelation of the essence of consciousness and the quest for self-identity in its entirety. They conduct extensive research on the purpose of life. Their thoughts and issues are addressed through their own experiences and integrated into the framework of their work. The human condition and life are tragically portrayed in their plays. Drama evolves with a progressing civilization and emerges as a potent influence in human affairs, challenging established customs and social systems that perpetuate exploitation and humiliation. It has evolved to portray a bleak and unvarnished portrayal of the world, filled with harsh truths, human anguish, terror, and loneliness, rather than providing only amusement. The contemporary writers portrayed home relationships and societal issues that were universally recognized by the audience in their dramas.

Keywords: Literature, modern literature, drama, dramatist, human struggles, modern dramatist.

Introduction

Drama began as a form of religious expression. Primitive people worshipped their gods in a form of drama which was meant to ensure the renewal of life in the growth of crops leading to the harvest each year. Still it is in several parts of world, the Middle East, India, North and South America and parts of Africa to honour the memory of dead heroes, kings, or ancestors. The means of Entertainment like Drama was unknown to the medieval folk and naturally they rush to watch the liturgical performances. Churches could not accommodate such activities and were often found to be inadequate. Obviously, these performances were carried out outside the churches. Some monks and priests even supported these performances. These plays depicted the lives of legendary heroes that is God's and Goddesses, Saints and others. But, a over a period of time even such plays were prohibited from being enacted. British drama of the eighteenth century is chiefly remembered for the work of a few writers of comedy, such as Sheridan and Goldsmith, whose plays are often amusing, and give a good picture of social life of the time. During the later eighteenth century and the nineteenth century there was a notable decline in

play-writing, although a high standard of acting was maintained. Shakespeare was revised and sometimes rewritten. Plays with unreal sentiment and sensation captured the public attention. And on the stage all kinds of elaborate equipment and devices were used to make the scene as near to real life as possible—real water, real trees, and sometimes real animals. It was not a good age for drama in Europe. People were too self-satisfied, too interested in moneymaking to produce good drama (Ackerman, 1987). They became interested in the expensive ‘extras’, such as elaborate scenery, rather than in the real thing. Then towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a feeling all over Europe that a change was coming in Western civilization. Great new inventions and discoveries had been made. New ideas were shaking the complacency of many people. Socialism came to challenge the rich and support the lower classes. This was a new age, in which drama could once again become an energetic and powerful force in human affairs, rather than a polite entertainment for the rich. Drama started choosing new subject form the ordinary lives of society instead of choosing subject from Bible and Chronicles. In the process new theories, Naturalism, Realism, Expressionism, Modernism and Absurdism were manifested into Drama in portraying human life and society realistic to realize man from illusion to rational to face extreme situations. The perspective of life is totally changed in the beginning of modern age (Dowling, 2007).

Literature Review

The plays of Naturalism exhibit the actual social life in the real world. The characters portrayed on the stage resemble the actual personage in real life. The plays in this theory are not meant for entertainment, but to show what men are. The experimental and scientific spirit of the era that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century brought a flood of the new problems and situations into the lives of men. Playwrights focused on the “dramatic” moments from the lives of common men and women. Writers of Naturalism portrayed the lives of common man in natural background without any external influences. The Writers depict the lives of the characters within the limits of Nature devoid of artificial embellishments. They live in a care free world unmindful of troubles and tribulations of the Urbane, civilized life. The naturalists included the French novelist Émile Zola and the Americans Stephen Crane, and Norris. Andre Antoine founded the Theatre Libre in Paris in 1887 and staged plays, including Tolstoy’s *Power of Darkness*, Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*, Ibsen’s *Ghosts* and Hauptmann’s *the weavers*, which were formed by naturalist ideas and which subsequently became standard works in the European independent theatres (Hutton, 2003).

The words are the wails of Nora who is passing by mental agonies on the appalling death of her brother, Michael. The words spoken by Nora add to the pathos of the situation. Nobody can withstand such calamity, casted upon Maurya family. The characters and interactions portrayed in naturalistic manner. The feelings and emotions are very common to Human irrespective of position and power. Naturalism helps to the viewers that they imagine themselves into the characters on the stage which is quite natural in everyday life. The roles and conversations appeared on the stage not different from normal life and situations by J.M.Synge in this play. Emile Zola laid a path in using the technique of Naturalism in drama to depict the situation of society through ordinary lives on the stage. Some of his novels took the shape of plays. They advocated the philosophy of fatalism which makes human beings’ puppets in the hands of fate. The characters in these plays are subjected to fate which influences their lives. This kind of philosophy is akin to that of Thomas Hardy’s as reflected in his poem, ‘To an unborn pauper child’. In this poem, Hardy addresses a baby in the mother’s womb and urges it not to be so anxious to come into existence as it has to be prepared to face the bitter consequences of life. The poet confirms the powerful nature of fate which subjects humans to sorrows and sufferings. He appeals to the baby on those grounds (Booth, 1991).

Slowly the technique of naturalism started using in Theatre. It is expanded to German. The technique of Naturalism gets its significance by Antoine who staged plays of Ibsen and Strindberg in theatre, Hauptman and Brahm. After writing Hauptman his first paly, *VorSonnenaufgang*, he gave it to Brahm for his new theatre. This play heralded the birth of

naturalism in the German Theatre and established Hauptmann as the first German naturalistic playwright. Hauptmann's plays focused the attention of the spectators on the social-democratic views of the common people of his day. His *Die Weber* was written to draw the attention of both the state and the public to the problems of Silesian weavers, that showed in their revolt in 1844(King, 2013).

The hidden state of minds exhibited by Freudian and Jungian psychology. The disturbances caused by First World War gave rise to disbelief in materialistic world and doubts the very existence of God. It resulted the new expressionism in a view to build sophisticated man and society. Arnold Bronnen's *Vatermord* which had written in 1915 caused furore. The play begins with A young man make love to his mother and stabbed his father. The dramatization exhibit hidden sub-conscious minds and inner voice of souls. It results to develop well-made play. George Buchner used many techniques of modern expressionism in his brief years of playwriting. His greatest work *Dantons Woyzeck* was the origin of the Expressionistic movement. It laid a path to take up new experiments in Expressionism. Buchner's perception of society and events are taken From French Expressionism used effectively in Buchner's unfinished work *Woyzeck*. The theme of the play was based upon the true and sordid case of regiment barber in Leipzig who stabbed his mistress in a fit of jealousy and was sentenced to death. *Woyzeck* world is completely filled with common people. The play depicts how *Woyzeck's* actions affected by external forces of society. The central character of the play is the victimized. Life is a torment for poor *Woyzeck* (North, 1991). He is beaten and humiliated by his rival the Drum Major. In another scene, *Woyzeck* worried about his wife who was not loyal to him. He had become despair. He could not digest it. It is driven to kill her. In the 1920s the expressionist movement in Germany spread to other countries like America where playwrights like Elmer Rice took it up. In Rice's *Adding Machine* the name of the principal character is Mr. Zero, a dehumanized man. With the spirit of Germany, The Austrian expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka started a new movement with his one act play, *Murder, the Hope of Women*. It was influenced by Strindberg's *The Dance of Death*. Kokoschka's work exhibits violent eroticism. He is known to public by emphasizing his anti-social attitude. His Theatre posters also very shocked the people. *Murder, the Hope of Woman* was a grim battle of the sexes, set in vaguely medieval and mythological period, and played by characters labelled 'Man' and 'Woman'. Each had a choric band of followers. The characters of the play speak in fierce, elliptical outbursts in blue armour, has a white face with a kerchief covering a wound, and is the leader of a savage crowd of men. The woman has loose yellow hair and wears red clothes. As soon as these two meets, the Man orders his men to brand the woman. So, she is able to imprison him in a cage, round which she creeps 'like a panther' and whose bars she 'grips lasciviously' before prodding his wound and 'hissing maliciously, like an adder'. At the end the Man recovers his strength and kills the Woman, an action intended to represent the murder of all women. The dialogue is minimal, an invitation to the free expression of feeling and movement(Megson, 2010).

Kaiser continued the tradition in using Expressionism in Germany. Kaiser had become very popular by the play *From Morn to Midnight* which deals the subject of Poverty. A terrifying portrait of man in an industrial society appears in Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy, which shows human idealism defeated again and again by the progress of technology, a theme of utter pessimism. The three plays tell the story of an industrialist's family. The whole themes of the plays reflected around modern industry and the post-war mood most closely. A generation has passed, war has broken out and the factory is now producing a poison gas which eats away the flesh. In the most pessimistic of Kaiser's plays, the message is that civilization will finally be its own destroyer. These plays are the seen the characteristics associated with German Expressionism. The most important play of the Czech playwright Karl Capek was influenced by Kaiser's *Gas* and used the technique of Expressionism effectively. This was *R.U.R:Rosum's Universal Robots*(1921), a piece of expressionistic science fiction which brought its author a world-wide reputation, and also coined the word 'Robot'(from the Czech word 'slavery'). *R.U.R.* is an international company which manufactures machines that almost behave like human beings. These robots' rebel and conquer the human race, but they cannot reproduce themselves unless they acquire the

qualities of human love. The politically inspired plays of Ernst Toller also speak to the whole condition of mankind and of general human suffering (Reynolds, 2007).

Another writer Vakhtangov had joined MAT in 1911 and he put his theories into practice with great success. He introduced exaggerated expressionistic devices to underline a point unambiguously. Grotesque make-up and gestures were used to satirize the French bourgeoisie—a miser for example, would hold his hands palms up and with grasping fingers. The automatic movements of the figures turned the play into a grim farce. It has been changed by Nikolai Pavlovich Okhlopkov who studied under Meyerhold. He modified his master's expressionistic style. The Theory of Expressionism modified with new techniques in modern times. It is adopted in America. The designer and director Robert Edmond Jones not only assimilated the new theories of space and light, but successfully put them into practice. It was Robert Edmund Jones who helped to start Eugene O'Neil (1888-1953) on his path as an experimental playwright. With the result, O'Neil produced greatest Expressionistic plays, *The Emperor Jones* in 1920 and *The Hairy Ape* in 1922 (Watt, 2011).

The conventional philosophy of *laissez-faire* in the United States, with its optimistic reliance on individualism exhibited in Neil plays. He turned to the new expressionism. He followed particularly to Strindberg, for a form which would better express his own disenchantment. O'Neil's reading in Greek Tragedy, Strindberg, Weikind and Freud prompted him to turn to expressionism as a way making a more personal statement. After O'Neil, Expressionism was used in the Great plays *The Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice (1923), *Death of a Salesman* (1949) by William Tennyson and *Camino Real* (1953). *The Adding Machine* was a play of general social protest, putting on the stage a vision of a dehumanized, mechanical society dominated by commerce. The Theory of Expressionism used in the playwrights of Ireland by the master of Naturalism, Sean O'Casey in the play *The Plough and the Stars*. It is popularized with *The Silver Tassie* in 1928. In the brilliant act II of this play, the heated patriotic oratory of the shadowy figure outside the pub, heard in counterpoint with the increasingly noisy, drunken voices inside, is halfway to creating a ritualistic effect of the expressionistic kind. His next work, *Within the Gates* was an attempt at a modern morality play which would satirize the years of the Depression. The play was a total immersion in the techniques of expressionism. In most of these plays, the principal characters protest. They desire to bring about revolutionary social changes. The world which they see from their subjective point of view is different from the world visible to a normal person. They never compromise with existing social circumstances. And they revolt against middle-class morality. The expressionist playwrights ignored the conventional three-act structure. They preferred small scenes, quickly following each other. Their sentences were short and crisp. Their dialogue became staccato-like the ungrammatical language of a telegram speaking out the essentials to convey the idea. To express their inside they used soliloquies and asides, which the naturalists shunned as unusual to most persons. The expressionist Artist Directors used black-curtains, cut-outs, half-walls and steps on their stage. The sharp rays of spot-lights picked up the actors. The stage was never flooded with light in expressionist plays. Light and shadow were equally important. Expressionism, which entered the theatre with a bang after the World War, deserted it as quickly as it appeared, and ended with a whimper as an experiment and a change. It was interesting, but it could not sustain that interest for long. Only a handful of expressionist plays were left behind by this movement which faded out in the late 1920s. Compared to naturalism or symbolism, expressionism had a short life in the theatre. As Robert Edmund Jones said, expressionism presented the "violent storm of emotion beating up from the unconscious mind" (Dowling, 2007). And perhaps because of the violent nature of emotion, it exhausted its energies too soon. Expressionist plays did not become as popular as romantic or naturalistic plays. With their de-personalized characters that discouraged identification, with their mechanized acting and with the display of fluctuating, violent and convulsive moods, they confused the audience. Their noisy and humour less situations did not retain the interest of the spectators for long. The failure of the expressionist movement in the theatre to banish naturalism from the theatre, because naturalism had struck its roots deep, once

again proved that on the stage the spoken word cannot be replaced by sound and light (Wilkinson, 1997).

Discussions

It is to determine that how human travails in modern age through the windows of drama has been portrayed. The ultimate of the human life is peace and happiness. In the name of progress and development, Man has lost his identity. Materialistic world dominates the actual nature of the man. The structure of the society is changed based on wealth after industrialization. The gap between rich and poor is increased. Capitalists control the Governments in making policies in favour of increasing their wealth against reducing poverty and unemployment in every nation. The aspects of life in everywhere in the world have been changed. Man has lost faith in God after two world wars. The consequences of war is completely desperate human life into insecure. Human values are degraded. Drastic changes in aspect of life and culture created confusion and fear to sustain in the society. The reformed constitutions have been succeeded in every nation in providing rights to the people but not given inner peace and happiness. It leads to disintegration within the family and outside. New psychological problems have started in society like depression, stress, loneliness which leads to commit suicide. Travails are common in haves and have nots. In this study, the essence of realization in Man from the past conditions existed in different cultures and societies towards building right society free from exploitation, humiliation, discrimination, belittlement, inequality and dominance has been discussed through the plays of Modern dramatists. The emptiness and hollowness of life is avoided with optimistic nature of the individual in every society. It is the responsibility of all governments to provide right education to all sections of people in the society towards promoting universal belongingness like 'Human'. Laws should be strengthened and reformed in every nation to protect human rights. The regulations of the Law must be moulded to distribution of wealth equally to every citizen of the nation to avoid exploitation, frustration humiliation. Woman must be given equal rights and treated equally with men in all kinds of societies (Bourgeois, 1966).

Ibsen is the pioneer of the Modern drama. He discussed the contemporary problem of ill treatment of woman from husband in the play *A Doll's House*, He raised woman voice towards fight for their rights despite of compromising to discharging family duties without self-respect in male dominated society. The solution for the problem according to Ibsen is empowering women through education and employment. Self-earning always makes the woman ready to face any extreme conditions in life. It is explained by J.M.Synge in the Play *Riders to the Sea*. The sorrows and miseries are common to the woman due to sudden loss of their husbands and sons who are the earners in the family at tender age by the powerful tides of the sea. Governments should focus on coastal lines setting of life in every nation and make alternative arrangements for their lively hood from life threat. Marital life is very important to the individual. The married couple must mutually understand each other. They must respect each other. Otherwise the harmony is disappeared in the society. It is clearly explained by T.S.Eliot in the play *The Cocktail Party*. He mentioned clearly the importance of psychological counselling at the time of marital disputes. It is only the solution to married couple to re-union in spite of divorce in now a day. The way you look at the problem is important to get right solution. In the *Cocktail party*, the Psychologist changed both mindset with counselling at right time and they're united. All nations in the world focused on youth abilities. They are particular in strengthening youth capabilities and capacities. They decide the nation economy. Where maximum youth involved in work than unemployment, that nation is going to be progressed very fast than remaining. It is the responsibility of all governments should create a mechanism and should strengthen education system to get employability skills as well as becoming entrepreneurs according to the needs of society. Osborne clearly explained in the play the power of youth in the character Jimmy porter. Having higher education in great university, he started sweet stall. He is with full of dissatisfaction. Still today also, it is the same condition for youth in all nations. Majority is unemployed. They are changed as terrorists. It is not the right sign for upcoming societies. Governments should create facilities to youth empowering them in all dimensions to build the nation scientifically and morally. Another burning problem in today's world is job in security in

private sector. There is no difference between man and Machine in treatment. Where machine is in working condition, it is used. When it stops working it is thrown into dustbin. In the similar manner, when an employee is in young age, he is continued. Whereas the employee crossed above middle age, they fired him without any reason. At this age, who is responsible for their family? The companies aim at gain more profits with less investment. Manual labour is very cheap than machine. So many people have become victims of their exploitation (Gilman, 1974).

It is clearly shown in the Drama *Death of Salesman* by Arthur Miller. He is dreamt of bright life for his family and sons and wants to run business on his own. At the time of getting position, he is fired by new boss of the company. He could not digest it and became helpless. He thought that his death would give justification. At the end he committed suicide. Company laws should be changed. The people who worked for the company more than twenty years' service, company must share profits to the employees. In the process of Advancement of science and technology, man lost all his senses. He forgets his roots. He started showing discrimination based on race, region and religion. The Black coloured people are suffered under whites in the name of racism and their frustration to get recognition as a fellow human being like white clearly explained through the character 'Yank' in the play 'The Hairy Ape' by Eugene O'Neil. He portrayed American contemporary social situation of racial discrimination in modern age also. Post-war conditions of society, frustration of people and their crisis leads to loneliness clearly explained in the play *Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. Human relations are very important to live in the family. Emotional security is important than hypocrisy. Emotional bonding is possible through internal truth. Relationship is strong only by purity of thought, mind and action. They always must be the same. Man is always learning lessons from different experiences in his life. Realization of right behaviour and right culture of individual comes out by only of their repentance not by any legal punishments. The change in person's thinking and behaviour completely depends on social conditions and circumstances not by instinct. No one is good and bad by birth itself. The brought-up conditions definitely impacted on his life style. Personality is moulded on this basis of this formula. Same is portrayed in the play "Play boy of the Western world" by J.M.Synge. It is responsible of the parents to bring up the children in right environment. The same is responsible to the educational institutions and another one is society. It is a teacher for the individual.

Conclusion

In contemporary society, individuals experience distress and hopelessness as a result of machines. The post-war period has had a profound impact on the human condition, particularly in relation to the existential realm. One notable consequence has been the emergence of a pervasive fear of mortality among individuals. Human beings have embarked on a quest to understand the essence of life and the meaning behind our existence. The individual is unable to locate a solution. The individual initiated a process of inquiry regarding the existence and nature of a higher deity. If God possessed great power, it would be expected that churches would be safeguarded. The event did not occur. Additionally, they were subjected to demolition. The human population has experienced a decline in faith towards a higher power. The degradation of values occurred. The structure of societies underwent a complete transformation as a result of the influence of materialism. Suffering and hardships are pervasive phenomena experienced by individuals across various socioeconomic backgrounds on a global scale. Individuals experience a sense of isolation even when surrounded by others. In the pursuit of safeguarding privacy, interpersonal connections are disrupted, leading individuals to experience isolation. I possess a complete lack of confidence in interpersonal connections. All interpersonal connections exhibit a hypocritical nature as they lack a foundation in internal veracity. The plays *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett effectively illustrate this notion. The challenges faced by individuals reached their pinnacle during the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century. The challenges can be mitigated through the promotion of humanism and the cultivation of universal brotherhood. The cultivation of optimism in individuals is fostered through the belief in oneself and the act of assisting others during times of adversity.

The present challenges faced by humanity in the contemporary era have provided an opportunity for drama to regain its vigour and potency as a means of enlightening individuals and encouraging a shift towards humanistic values. This is exemplified in the extensive body of work produced by notable modern dramatists such as Ibsen, T.S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, J.M. Synge, and John Osborne. These playwrights delve into the intricacies of human existence, challenging prevailing societal beliefs and conventions, and presenting characters grappling with extraordinary circumstances.

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