

Social Injustice in John Galsworthy's Plays

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ABSTRACT:

John Galsworthy had taken the responsibilities and serious efforts were made on his part, to fight the struggles of the modern man. Therefore in each of his plays he has given us a lesson, a teaching and remedy for the question which lingers from a very long time. He seems to take little interest in himself. He never allowed his personality to intrude into his characters and writings is concerned. Galsworthy's lips were not tightened because of things done to him but because of things done to others. His tragedies show the waste of precious human lives, move us immensely. He was a man of his age a man of a very definite and well marked section of the British community, but he had a temperament which tended to make him a man of all times and a man of the universal human family.

He wanted to see all human being happy. He wanted to take man away from the clutches of the invisible forces of this modern world, which is creating a hindrance in his progress to create a good life, Galsworthy's sensibility, the problems of man and his society became the problems of his own heart. The dramatist and his personal feelings whatever he felt for the underdog and oppressed, became the inseparable part of his life which he tried to convey through his dramas.

Galsworthy presented his plays the panorama of English life with perfect sincerity, fairness and impartiality. The structure of his dramas, his humanism the sincerity of his art and the faithful picture that he has drawn of the life around him with all its conflicts and problems has secured Galsworthy an honorable niche for himself in modern English drama.

Keywords:

Offenders, Stealing, Adultery, Unemployment, Poverty, Livelihood, Blind Malignant Force, Rescue, Forges, Solitary Confinement, Absconder, Hope.

Laws and conventions are made for better living in the society. But the institutions which implement these conventions cause excessive misery to the law breakers or offenders. By making a fuss on them or holding these rules firmly, "criminals are treated harshly and the result is, 'the sinner is sinned against more than his sinning'. In "Silver Box", the play deals with a theme that 'there is one law for the poor and another for the rich'. Jack Barthwick, an undergraduate of Oxford, is the rich son of an MP. He steals a purse under the influence of drink just as a joke. Mr. Jones an unemployed, poor worker helps Jack to get in his own house, Jack offers him whisky. Both drink, Jack falls asleep. Jones drink a lot and then just to score off Jack, Jones steals the fallen purse of the lady and also silver cigarette box lying on the table. Thus both of them drink and commit similar crimes of stealing. Though Jones is not perfectly innocent and good, it also must be noted that Jack too is a young guy given to drinking and adultery, moreover the box is also not of much value. If justice be done then both of them should be punished. But in reality, it is Mr. Jones who is sentenced to one month hard labour because he could not employ a clever lawyer. His father MP, Mr. John Barthwick employs a clever solicitor to save not only his son but also his own honour and reputation Jack is left scot free just because he is rich. Unless law is made more impartial many miserable lives will be crushed, a revolution can not be far off. In the drama other social voices also are raised by dramatist i.e. the problem of unemployment and poverty (Mr. And Mrs. Jones and Mr. Livens want to work but they don't get job), the problem of prostitution the unknown lady is one among the unfortunate girls who run the shameful profession of prostitution to earn livelihood.

Another drama falling under the same category of social injustice is 'Justice'. 'Justice' is one more play on the theme of crime and punishment in this play Galsworthy wants to show that law is a blind malignant force that crushes down an innocent person under its iron heels.

Mr. Falder an honest and sincere clerk at the Firm of James and Walter How who falls in love out of compassion with an unfortunate married woman Mrs. Ruth Honeywill. She is ill treated by her cruel, drunken husband. Falder wants to rescue her from his clutches. One day, her husband tries to strangle her to death, she goes to Falder for his help. Falder wishes to send her somewhere, wants to help her to get divorce, so that he could marry with her later. It requires money and Falder had not any money. In the momentary fit of madness he forges a cheque of the Firm of nine pounds for ninety, his crime is detected. He is caught and trailed in the court

where he admits his guilt and also says that he had no intention of cheating. He would return the money later. But his request goes in vain. He is sentenced for three years vigorous punishment first three months in solitary confinement. He completes his term and comes out. He decides to start a new life by a job at the old firm. But before he could settle, he is arrested by the police again as he has not reported to the police station as a convict he ought to do. Falder's dream is shattered to pieces he tries to escape, and jumps down and dies. Thus the heartless, mechanical process of the blind law considers the action but it does not pay any heed to the feelings that motivate the action. An innocent person loses his life and the unfortunate woman suffers ill treatment of her husband because of the hardship of law. No human being, but it is the law that has played villainy upon the helpless people here.

The other three plays coming under the category of social injustice are, 'The Show', 'Escape' and 'The Forest'. 'The Show' 1925 attacks on the journalist who takes delight in spreading scandals about the private life of an important person. In 'Escape' 1926, Galsworthy criticizes the cruelty of society towards the prisoner who is released from jail after completing his term. But the same society welcomes an absconder who breaks the law and escapes from prison. 'The Forest' exposes the unkind treatment of financiers who ruin ordinary people by their unscrupulous speculation. The dramas dealing with caste feeling are 'Strife',

'The Eldest Son', 'The Weavers', 'Foundations', 'The Skin Game' and 'Loyalties'. The plays dealing with the problem of out-castes are 'The Pigeon' and 'The Windows'. The plays dealing with family relations are 'Joy', 'The Fugitive' and 'Family Man'. Plays dealing with idealism are 'A Bit of Love' and 'Mob'. There is one element in these tragedies which is not found in earlier tragedies. That is the element of hope. The situation of the victim was hopeless. But when we see man being crushed down by the force of a defective legal system, there is hope. The system can be reformed. There are social corrections to all the problems and they are within everybody's reach.

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