



## ANTON CHEKHOV'S CONCERN FOR MANKIND A STUDY OF HIS MAJOR PLAY THE SEAGULL

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### ABSTRACT

The paper deals with Chekhov's Concern for mankind. Chekhov successfully handles love, industry illusion and reality, degeneration of the aristocracy the future happiness of mankind. The seagull depict charming and interesting characters. Chekhov's lovers are unable to fulfill their dreams and lead a purposeful and contented life. Industry is the essence of life as it helps to comprehend the meaning of existence. Chekhov's men lack courage a hope to face the painful task of life. Chekhov's women represent the bright side of life and almost all of them passes indomitable will and courage to overcome the difficulties of life. He is a robust optimist who believes that one day people of all the world will definitely enjoy peaceful co existence and real, meaningful happiness.

**KEYWORDS** : Ibsenism, Impotence Indomitable, Pedantic

A brief study of the gradual and steady growth of Russian theatre is essential to understand Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), the great Russian dramatist who is internationally known for his realistic plays. He started writing, short stories under the pen name Antosha chekhonte during his school days, at the university of Moscow from which he received his degree in medicine in 1884. Chekhov wrote Ivanov his first full - length play but it was but it was not success. In 1896, The Seagull was produced by the newly systematized Moscow Art theatre, it was an overwhelming success in 1899. Uncle Vanya followed in 1901 by Three Sisters and in 1904 by The Cherry Orchard. During this period, Chekhov was forced to spend a great deal of time in European health resorts because of his tuberculosis. He expired in 1904.

Chekhov's plays reveal his great felicity for characterization. The plot is secondary to him. The structure of the play by Chekhov has no "beginning" and "end" It is all middle. Among the three classical unities, the Unity of Action received the utmost care from Chekhov, Chekhov's plot helped him to develop characterization rather than action. Chekhov did not agree with Aristotle and concentrated on characterization, following the Russian tradition. Chekhov's study of medicine guided him in his life and helped him to cultivated scientific observation. In Chekhov's major plays, The seagull is prominent for its allusions to many other writers. The first is Ibsen's wild Duck. The gratuitous way in which a seagull is picked up and Nina is affiliated with it is a parody of Ibsen. By casting Nina as a 'Seagull' a victim, he pacifies the guilt he feels at having hurt a human beings. However the Petersburg committee saw only 'preconceived and unnecessary Ibsenism.

Chekhov's genuine concern for the lovers can be discerned in his plays, to him, mere physical attraction cannot strengthen human relationship. He stresses the importance of intellectual aspects, of love combining harmoniously with the emotional aspects in order to create enjoyable and eternal human relationship. Chekhov who worked tirelessly throughout his life know for certain that they could not be any substitute for industry. His concern for mankind in his firm faith in industry and according to him any people who wants to lead a meaningful life has to toil hard unmindful up the hardships up life.

Chekhov's presentation of men in his plays is objective and he depicts them as they are. He does not want to judge anyone, but he wants people to see life as it exists. Chekhov wants them to wake up to then realities of life. To him, men are unimpressive become they indulge in endless and meaningless discussions, but they do not have the bold initiative to act. They take refuge in escapist attitude to conceal their impotence. Chekhov's women represent the bright side of life and almost all of them possess indomitable will a courage to overcome the difficulties of life. Though he admired women, he could not stand any sort of domestic intimacy the carefully avoided serious involvement with any women.

Chekhov's portraits of characters include school teachers, doctors... and land owners who are usually intelligent but they are unhappy. Insignificant and deprived of will. They profoundly regret the swift passage of their lives. Chekhov's deep concern for the welfare of school. Teachers can be clearly seen in the depiction of Medvedenko of the Seagull. Simon Medvedenko of the Seagull in thirty two years old, and he is decent person with great reverence for learning. He is a faithful copy of the teacher whom Chekhov met in his life. He earns twenty three roubles a month, and he does not have the basic necessities of life. He is love with Masha and walks eight miles everyday in order to see her. He want's the writers to highlight the problems of poor teachers. His endless miseries have made him indifferent to learning. His married life with Masha is an unhappy one, and even his chld becomes an additional burden to him. His wife does not care for him and her parents do not treat him with respect. However, he is pedantic and insensitive to the needs up his wife. He is the right type of man to be exploited by a predatory women like Masha.

In Chekhov's time doctors in the dull provincial towns found life unbearable, as they had to attend to the patients living in unhygienic surrounding. The dullness, stupidity laziness and ignorance of people terrified the doctors and they could not help feeling that one day they would also become misfits. Chekhov, being a physician himself, had a soft corner for the doctors, but he presented them objectively in his plays as they were with all their virtues & vices. As a doctor himself, Chekhov has portrayed Dr. Dorn of the Seagull.

Dr. Eugene Dorn is a popular physician enjoying the boundless admiration of women. Even at the age of fifty five he continues to enchant women, and Polina, the wife of Shamrayev, is in love with him. Dr. Dorn's success with the ladies never makes him lose his balance of mind. He has genuine concern for Treplev and considers Treplev as a better writer than Trigorin. Chekhov observes that Treplev's lack of aim and his excessive use of symbols spoil his talent.

Like Chekhov, Dorn's real concern and Love of mankind is boundless, and true. He consoles Masha, when she confesses to him her love for Treplev. He ridicules Medvedenko, the school teacher, for his lack of knowledge, but he is ready to support him, when he says, that Sorin should give up smoking in the interest up his health. He disagrees with Sorin when he says that Masha pretensions nature. He knows that Arcadina and Sorin cannot manage the estate without Shamrayev. His observation that Arkadina and Sorin will beg Shamrayev to continue as the manager proves to be true. Dr. Dorn is a romanticist and is one of the most lovable of stage doctors. He is a man of deep thought and he has healthy views on life. Life has taught him not to expect too much from it. His character is 'flat' but fascinating.

Chekhov's concern for the degeneration of landowners can be discerned after a intensive study of his major plays. The landowners

of Chekhov's time were unimaginative, impractical and unpatriotic. They were totally ignorant of a sweeping changes that were taking place around them. The serfs become free in 1861, and they were in no mood to be bossed over by the landowners. They were in search of a new identity for themselves and started cultivating self respect ignorant and complacent landowners found themselves in self - created problem and were unable to look after their land. Added to that, this indulgence in other unprofitable activities landed them in financial difficulties. They lost their properties and had to depend on wealthy landlord, to etc out their living. From a respectable high state they fell headlong and had no other option but to live as parasites.

In *The Seagull*, the degeneration of landowners centres around the characters of Irina Arkadina and Peter Sorin. Irina is not bothered about the estate in the country. She wants to be an actress. She wants to have Trigorin, the famous writer, under her firm control, and she is prepared to sacrifice anything to have him for herself. Peter Sorin, the retired civil servant, is forced to languish in the estate. But for Shamrayev's management of the estate, it would have degenerated long ago. Arkadina is not interested in the estate, and Sorin is too old to look after it. They have to depend on the tyrant Shamrayev for the running of the estate. Sorin begs Arkadina to take him to the city and enable him to enjoy life at the city and of it. Sorin is retired and he has nowhere else to go. The degeneration of Sorin is complete as he is condemned to languish in the country side.

As one is aware, literature and life are inseparable. Chekhov believed that the sole purpose of literature should be absolute and honest truth. His concern for mankind can be discerned in his theme. His art is true and his concern for the suffering mankind is also true. He sympathized with the downtrodden of society and did his best to mitigate their suffering by offering them generous financial assistance. Chekhov will be remembered by posterity as a dramatist of realism, robust optimism and humanism. His plot, themes, characterization and innovative technique will continue to fascinate discerning scholars all over the world.

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