



SOCIAL ETHICS IN LEO TOLSTOY'S STORIES

Dr. Naveen Kumar Jha

Associate Professor in English, R.A.G.S. College, Ahalyasthan, Ahiyari, Kamtaul, K.S.D.S. University, Darbhanga.

ABSTRACT

Tolstoy was born at Yasnaya Polyana. His family estate was at hundred miles south of Moscow. He made attempts to apply his radical moral beliefs to his own life and became the most prominent novelist and story writer in an age and place of great authors. In all his works we find a confluence of moral and intellectual errors that he perceived in modern life and thought at the turn of the twentieth century. We can keep Tolstoy's activity in threefold. He was an artist, who produces fictions in various genres and with various ends in view. He was a religious thinker and publicist, who develops and explains a philosophical system with ethical in its emphasis. More importantly, he was an aesthetician, who elaborates a theory of universal comprehensible art.

KEYWORDS : Radical; Moral; Confluence; Ethical; Aesthetician

Tolstoy was a vociferous critic of science and modernization. It is said that his international fame was due to his two novels, *War and Peace* (1865–1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1875–1877). His fictional works also include short masterpieces such as "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886), "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1889), and "Master and Man" (1895). There are autobiographical accounts of his childhood including *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, *Youth 1852–1857* and his experiences as a soldier in the Crimean War. With regard to issues of science, technology, and ethics Tolstoy's most relevant writings include a variety of short, passionate non-fiction works, particularly "What I Believe" (1884), "What Then Must We Do?" (1887), "On the Significance of Science and Art" (1887), "What Is Art?" (1898), and "I Cannot Be Silent" (1908).

Tolstoy's stories are known for description, characterization and social and moral issues. A total of some two dozen stories appeared in one or more editions including "What Men Live By", "Two Old Men", "Where Love Is, There Is God Also", "How Much Land Does a Man Need", "The Tale of Ivan the Fool", and "The Three Hermits". All of the stories are told by a third person narrator. The narrator's voice closely resembles that of the popular characters, and his outlook is sympathetic to them. His sympathy may vary, however. In "What Men Live By," "Two Old Men," and "The Tale of Ivan the Fool," the narrator identifies himself closely with the characters. We may find also that the narrator's stance is more objective and neutral, as in "Two Brothers and the Gold." We do hardly find the voice of the narrator sarcastic despite the fact that his depiction is of upper class society.

Tolstoy's story is taken literally. Many of stories are connotative, since many of the figures in the story carry a suggested meaning, and the objects in it are symbolic. The title, for example, can be taken literally as a comparison of egg and grain. But it is not as simple as it looks at the surface. The origin of the above mentioned title shows that there is more meaning behind it that Tolstoy intended that way. The title was taken from an old French fable, similar in message. Tolstoy wanted to use it as a means of transforming his own beliefs into a parable that could be as easily communicated as old tales were by mouth. There are many connotative phrases that refer to abstract concepts, such as the man's reference to property, "My field was God's earth", for the greed and discontent.

The setting of the stories is popular and Russian, or legendary or exotic. We see that major characters are drawn from among the common people like the peasants. Characters from other backgrounds appear in major and sympathetic roles only when they are distanced in some way. In "A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg," there is a king has a major role in the

distant past. In "Il'ias," there is a rich landowner. In his stories we may come across supernatural characters, both angels and demons including the Devil himself to have been appearing. The Bible is actually quoted in nine of the stories, either in text or as epigraph. The influence of Biblical language affects nearly all of the stories. It is clearest in the language of divine characters such as the angels in "What Men Live By" and "Two Brothers and the Gold," the heavenly voice in "Where Love Is, There Is God Also" and the moralizing conclusion of "The Candle." All the stories for the people are more or less openly didactic and may even present a moral formally, as in "The Godson." Characters are most often developed through their actions and words. Occasionally the narrator characterizes his heroes directly, but usually he confines himself to brief physical descriptions. There is no psychological process of the characters described directly.

When we come to use of his language, it is studied, conscious, deliberate, and directed both at the creation of a popular tonal quality and at the avoidance of his former "literary" style. It has its tendency to syntactic and lexical complexity, foreignisms, and lengthy periodicity. Events usually occur in simple chronological order, but they also occur, according to folk conventions, in groups of three, as in "What Men Live By," "Where Love Is, There Is God Also," "The Tale of Ivan the Fool," and several others. Plot in these stories does not take on the complex forms with which Tolstoy experimented in such non-popular late works as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and *Resurrection* (*Voskresenie*), with their use of flashbacks and shifting points of view on the events described.

The theme in "How Much Land Does a Man Need," it takes the form of greed for more land than needed; in "The Imp and the Crust"--the misuse of a bumper crop of grain to produce strong drink; the contrast between the hero's current contentedness with poverty and his former anxiety with wealth. "Two Brothers and the Gold" and "A Grain As Big As a Hen's Egg" condemn the use of money as a replacement for active human concern.

The stylistic unity of the stories is the product of a number of linguistic and larger structural devices, proverbs, sayings, and other bits of popular wisdom. He incorporates all these devices into the stories. Stories as "God Sees the Truth, But Waits," "What Men Live By," "Two Old Men," "The Three Hermits," "Where Love Is, There Is God Also," and "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" possess high artistic value. They represent a masterful achievement in the creation--from heterogeneously related, elements in a unified style which has flexibility and is singularly well adapted to its solemn moral purpose. Tolstoy is fond of his "literary" style for comparison and contrast based upon binary groupings and phrase from common folk. He coined some popular lexicon or syntax to

help him make discoveries from his hidden shell that he has tried to maintain in his stories. Narrative or story telling developed from ritualistic chanting of myths.¹

Tolstoy a great writer and he seems to speak freely, in his stories, with the sort of moralistic-prophetic voice – the voice of a teacher of right and wrong focusing on three essential themes in narrative art including love, death and money. We should talk about his fictional places which are in time. His descriptions of landscapes and interiors are not taken as merely descriptions and nor merely symbolic; they are waypoints in a journey. They are burdens to be got rid of, obstacles to be overcome, lessons to be taken.

Matthew Arnold wrote in an early appreciation of Tolstoy, "Levin's shirts were packed up, and he was late for his wedding in consequence . . . Serge was very near proposing, but did not. The author saw it all happening so – saw it, and therefore relates it." Arnold makes it sound easy. And indeed when we read Tolstoy, it feels easy. This is life itself. It barely feels like artistry. But it takes genius to make art so closely resemble life. Although Tolstoy wrote most of the book, including all the narration, in Russian, significant portions of dialogue (including its opening paragraph) are written in French with characters often switching between the two languages. This reflected 19th century Russian aristocracy, where French, a foreign tongue, was widely spoken and considered a language of prestige and more refined than Russian.²

Tolstoy's message in the story is clear enough. Pahom destroys himself because he allows the sin of greed to guide his life. For Tolstoy, a Russian nobleman who, after a dissolute youth, reformed his behavior and eventually became a Christian mystic, it seemed clear that the devil had to be the catalyst of Pahom's destruction. Pahom, who's been a contented peasant working his own small farm and sharing in the community pastures – and in the community – becomes the devil's plaything once he expresses this weakness in the devil's hearing: Busy as we are from childhood tilling mother earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself! Tolstoy was instrumental in bringing a new kind of consciousness to the story. His narrative structure is noted for its "god-like" ability to hover over and within events, but also in the way it swiftly and seamlessly portrayed a particular character's point of view. His use of visual detail is often cinematic in its scope, using the literary equivalents of panning, wide shots and close-ups, to give dramatic interest to battles and ballrooms alike.³

CONCLUSION:-

Finally speaking, the stories for the people, with their absence of complex metaphorical language, maximally simplified syntax, syntactic inversion, peasant words and expressions, and the use of many devices and motifs from both folklore and Scripture; exemplify an innovative and coherent writing style. We may confidently agree with B. M. Eikhenbaum and S. P. Bychkov that they represent a remarkable stylistic departure from Tolstoy's earlier work. Tolstoy's use of language was studied, conscious, deliberate, and directed both at the creation of a popular tonal quality and at the avoidance of his former "literary" style, with its tendency to syntactic and lexical complexity, foreignisms, and lengthy periodicity.

REFERENCES

- (1.) V. I. Sreznevskii, "Iazyk i legendy v zapisiax L. N. Tolstogo," in S. F. Ol'denburgu: Sbornik statei (Leningrad, 1934) and K. S. Shokhor-Trotskii, "Zapisnaia kniga 1879 goda," Literaturnoe nasledstvo, Kn. 37-38 (1939):103-116
- (2.) Flaitz, Jeffra : The ideology of English: French perceptions of English as a world language, Walter de Gruyter, 1988, p. 3
- (3.) Emerson, Cary, "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin". PMLA 100 (1):, 1985, p. 68-80.