

C H A P T E R - I V

CCONCLUSION

C H A P T E R - IVC o n c l u s i o n

Greene and Stephen, the critics on Synge, are of the opinion that Synge was a man of ostensibly mediocre talent and that his visit to the Aran Islands converted him into a writer of genius. It is true that Aran was the source of his inspiration. But his plays and his great craftsmanship at characterization reveal that he was a creative artist, a romantic poet, close to John Keats in spirit, exemplifying beauty and truth in the life - pattern as a whole. It was only by that accident of fortune he came in touch with the people of the Aran Islands in whom he found that charm of life which could be found in true poetry alone.

With keen interest Synge observed the life-style of the Irish peasants. He was starkly aware of the tragic pattern of their life. From his account of his visit to Inishmaan we come to know that he was greatly delighted during the first week of his stay at Inishmaan. But after the first flush of enthusiasm he realized that such heroic life could be unbearable. He could see nothing but a mass of wet rock, a strip of surf, and a tumult of waves. Even he felt a plaintive note in the babble of the birds. He saw the revelation of his mystic contemplation of the universe in their life-style and presented it into the form of dramatic poetry.

Synge was used to contemplation of the mysteries of life. Therefore, his personality was of great influence on his work. The primitive life-style of the Aran islanders and their intimate relation with the nature made him explore more and more the depths of the mysteries of human life. He was interested in the pattern of life as whole. And what is life outside the living men and women? Therefore, his interests were centred around the human characters. Though his critics say that his imagination worked always from what he knew, and any form of life in his plays which was invented rather than observed looks unsubstantial or unconvincing, nevertheless, his characters represent the intrinsic qualities of human beings which are universal. The life-pattern is the same everywhere though men are removed from one another in respect of geographical distance and in respect of the quality and the width of civilization.

In his plays, Synge has presented his vision of life, he has seen on the Aran Islands. He inserts nothing of his own or hides nothing from presentation. His characters represent nothing outside themselves. He makes us pass into the depths of their minds where we could feel the subtle working of complex emotions. With the greatest economy of efforts he produces the widest effect. He was aware of the limitations of his medium viz., the stage. With this awareness, he portrays his characters with great craftsmanship. The art of his characterization lies in the fact that he concentrates

more on the 'human' in his characters than on the verbal or the decorative side of the stage. He has exhausted the elemental devices of drama viz., the plot, theme, setting and language. with such a skill as to give due weightage to his characters.

His plots are simple and carry the themes along with it. His themes are human. He dwells more and more on the subtle human emotions and arrives at a universal truth. Graham Greene in his novel. The Heart of the Matter says,

'Nobody knows what goes on in a single human heart'.

But Synge's plots reveal before us what goes on in the minds of his characters. Moreover, his characters reveal themselves in a language which is rich and living. It appears that the language springs from the depth of their heart. They speak what they feel, and their feelings are real. Their speech is not a mere verbatimism. There is no show of outward formality in their speech. Therefore, this living language and a sincere one adds a flavour of reality to the characters. They appear to be life - like in the context of their natural surrounding which Synge has exploited authentically. The geographical condition in which the characters are situated is responsible for their mental dispositions. Synge has used an authentic setting for his plays. Men

and nature are intimately connected with each other. It is the nature that moulds the character of men. For example, he shows that the tinkers, used to wandering and living among the hills are violent, or that the fisherman family, living in constant threat of the sea, is melancholic and has the power of defiance. Therefore, nature plays much the significant role in his art of characterization. He portrays his characters in close connection with the nature around them and enhances the reality of his characters.

In his tragedies, Synge emphasises the miserable side of life. The characters in tragedy do not call for sympathetic tears. There is suffering but it is not exaggerated. The wise men consciously and all men vaguely realise the utter canyity of living and worthlessness of all the things in the face of death. The clamness of this spirit is expressed in resignation and renunciation of all the too-fleeting and tormenting joys of existence. He asserts that death is as nothing to the spirit that is better even to cease upon the nothingness than live tormented by haunting memories and the drubness of the present.

The tragedy of his characters is brought about by the situation in which they are placed. Aristotle asserts that tragedy springs from within the characters due to some weakness which is called 'tragic flaw'. In

Shakespeare's tragedies, the characters themselves create the tragic situation around them. But in Synge's vision of life, it is the situation which is responsible for the tragedy of men. His characters feel more for the situation in which they are placed as it is tragic in itself. And their fates are determined by the situation with which they cannot fight. The sense of fate plays a principal part in his tragedies, cheating, deceiving, betraying and watching with a grim smile the tragedy of human beings. His characters are compelled to accept the life as it is. But their inability to change their fate does not mean that they are passive. They do their best to avoid the tragedy.

In his comedies too, death is constantly present. But there Synge can entertain us with the mock murder and mock resurrection. In his preface to The Linker's Wedding, he says;

Of the things which nourish the imagination humour is one of the most needful, and it is dangerous to limit or destroy it. Baudelaire calls laughter the greatest sign of the satanic element in man, and where a country loses its humour, as some towns in Ireland are doing, there will be morbidity of mind as Baudelaire's mind was morbid<sup>2</sup>.

But Synge's sense of humour is certainly not a light-hearted one as the laughter is suddenly extinguished

in the hallow of tragedy. In his vision of life he sees tears and laughter intermingled. His characters in comedy represent a truth. They have no special extra-comic status. They create the comic spirit by means of language alone which gives shape and significance to their lives. Synge pursues a comic image wherever it may take him, even to the edge of tragedy. He perceives the incongruities of individuals in society in a detached manner. Synge twists the received pattern of comedy in that his comedies do not end in marriage. All the comedies end unhappily and represent a melancholic vision of human condition. The marriage in The Shadow of the Glen is actually broken. In the Playboy of the Western World and Tinker's Wedding marriage does not take place. The bleak atmosphere of The Well of the saints comes as a shock to the audience accustomed to the happy ending of the play.

Synge met with severe criticism of his comedies as immoral. But morality is a word of no absolute meaning. There are certain instincts common in all the human beings, particularly those of a more violent character. Murder, especially, murder of one nearly allied to the criminal is commonly looked upon with abhorrence. But in The Playboy of the Western World, people appreciate Christy's deed as a heroic one. But Synge is careful enough to show the difference between the fantasy and the crime. He does not glorify the crime in this play. The people condemned Christy when he hit his old father in their presence. Likewise, The Tinker's Wedding is not immoral.

It was the accepted pattern of the tinker community to be match making and swaping the women. Synge is not praising the non-moral attitude in the story of The Shadow of the Glen. He sought to dramatize the universal aspects in the daily lives of the Irish peasants. His mainpurpose was the realistic representation of their life. He wanted to create the characters gifted with ~~imagi~~ imagination, involved in situations which are more elemental.

It is said that Synge cannot transcend the circumstances of his art. The syntax of his dialect is limited. The range of his characters is limited to West of Ireland. Daniel Corkery, an ardent Irish nationalist, says that Synge's range of mind was limited. He argues that "Synge must have been a nationalist, a 'cultural' rather than a political nationalist"<sup>3</sup>. Synge refutes this claim saying that,

An Irish drama that is written in Ireland about Irish people, and not on a foreign model will and must be national in so far as it exists at all. Our hope of it is that as Ireland is a beautiful and lovely country that the drama that Ireland is now producing may catch a little of this beauty and loveliness.....

A beautiful art has never been produced except in a beautiful environment and nowhere is there one more beautiful than in the mountains and glens of Ireland<sup>4</sup>.



Thus, within the narrow dimensions of his work, Synge is successful in portraying the life-like characters. Their passions and feelings have a universal appeal. They touch upon the very core of human existence and reveal the truth which is universal. Herein lies the success of Synge's characterization.

In the end, it may be said of his characters;  
So lively are the creations of fancy  
Emerging out of sheer poetry,  
The roots of which are stuff in life  
Inflaming the depths of mystery.

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