
CHAPTER-IV: CONCLUSION

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The poetry of Dylan Thomas, discussed here, on the concept of death, shows certain development. The concept of death finds significant expression in the bulk of Thomas's poetry. These poems of Dylan Thomas show his deep obsession with death. Writing on any other stage of human or natural life he is generally conscious of the existence of destruction. According to him his poetry is the "statements made on the way to the grave".

It is interesting to see that a man like Dylan Thomas was so obsessed by death. He was a bohemian. He did not care about anything in his life. Many times he was penniless but instead in one or two poems as 'On no work of words', he did not refer to his penniless condition. His friends always praised him because of his friendly and loving nature. It was because of his loving nature that Dylan Thomas had had many friends who helped him without selfishness. His poetry on the concept of death does not suit this happy-go-lucky nature of Dylan Thomas. But his stories, letters reveal his real or rather another side of nature which is expressed in his poetry.

highly. The first 2 spp. have shown why he had to be. Repetition

As a typical Anglo-Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas's poetry reveals certain characteristics of Anglo-Welsh writing. As discussed in Chapter-II, the influence of Welsh cultural, social and literary ethos comes to Thomas through certain Welsh speaking relatives and the translations of famous Welsh writings.

The Welsh background remains one of the richest sources of his poetry.

Death in its usual form, i.e., death due to age, occurred for the first time in his life in the form of the death of his aunt, Ann Jones. It is not that before this incident he had not written poems on the very theme. He wrote poems on the concept of death from the beginning of his career. But the death of his aunt was the death of some dear person whom he had seen and loved in his childhood and adolescence. His own illness in this or that form, his father's long standing cancer and afterwards his death, greatly affected Thomas's sensitive mind. Moreover he saw the second World War in his life, which disturbed every 'decent person' in the world. Declared unfit for the Military services he excused himself from killing the people but he could not avoid to see the killed innocents, with his eyes wide open. The imposed and unnatural deaths in the war shattered him.

Thomas looks at death from various points of view. In human life death can be witnessed in any stage. The embryo in the womb starts its journey towards the tomb. This is a natural process that every object in the universe is destined to its end. The embryo in the poems of Dylan Thomas is aware of this journey before he 'knocks' with its 'liquid hand'. It sews a 'shroud' of the skin for this journey. The awareness of suffering makes the embryo to tell its mother to send it back to the 'making

house'. But the mother tells the inevitability of the process, a journey of life towards death. The poet tells his six year old child to look other side of the world which is ugly and cruel and dangerous.

Dylan Thomas sees the destruction of youth. He sees the 'crooked worm' wearing the 'quick away beneath his nail'. He sees the destruction of the boys of 'summer'. The death due to age obliges him to mediate on the nature of death. He is moved by the cruel scene of burning London. A hand signs a fatal paper and fells a city. The hand is not a part of human body and human mind but it is a part of cruel mechanism of war. It is true that his poetry does not show any kind of social, political or economic awareness. But the war is too much for him not to take the notice of.

In addition to human death and destruction in various stages, Dylan Thomas keenly observes and exactly expresses the destruction of vegetable world. He feels the existence of one powerful force that works simultaneously in human and natural life. He becomes 'dumb' to tell the universal destruction by the same force. He expresses the process of human destruction in terms of external nature in "A process in the weather of the heart". The man is the part and parcel of nature. Thus Thomas's idea of universal destruction finds specific expression in his poems on the concept of death.

Death is not an incident that occurs directly. There are certain agents as Time, War and Sex, those are responsible for the decay and death of universal life. Though death is a natural process, it approaches any object as the time passes away. The poems such as "When like a running grave", "In country sleep", "Poem on his birthday" etc. convey this idea. If the death occurs suddenly, it is the untimely or unnatural death. The war poems, "Ceremony After a Fire Raid", "The hand that signed the paper", "The Wedding Anniversary" etc. express the untimely and unnatural death.

Sex, particularly destroys persons in their youth. As the boys of summer, do not become successful in love, they 'fetch their girls' in their dreams. The poet is also obsessed with the fear of sex which is expressed in "If I were tickled by the rub of love".

In this way the poetry of Dylan Thomas on the concept of death touches all the verges of universal life and becomes universal. The death of innocents in war is the representative of the death in any war. The death of his old aunt due to age is the representative of the death of any person in the old age. The fear of sex in adolescent or young age is also universal as everybody feels it in his adolescent and young age. The destruction in the vegetable life is an every-day thing which we ignore. But the sensitive mind of Dylan Thomas exactly puts

it in his poems such as "Over Sir John's hill" or "The force that through the green fuse". Thus the process of death in human and natural life is universal. The universality of Dylan Thomas's poems is a main characteristic of his poetry.

Similarly, Dylan Thomas shows certain development of his thoughts on the concept of death in his poetry. In the very first stage he fears death in such poems as "If I were tickled by the rub of love" and "The force that through the green fuse". He is so obsessed by death that the embryo of "Before I knocked" feels the existence of death in the womb. Then the poet defies the death. The poems "Do not go gentle into that good night" or "And death shall have no dominion" strongly speak of the defiance of death. After the defiance comes the mature stage of acceptance as in the poems "Twenty-Four years" or "Poem on his birthday".

The poet defies and accepts the death; because he believes in resurrection (not in the religious term) of all things in the universe. It is why he refuses to mourn the death. After the first death, there is no other, and other deaths are mere copies of the first death. Nothing is destroyed in the universe. Any object in the universe reforms itself after its destruction. The cycle of life never stops.

This analysis of death in Dylan Thomas's poetry takes us to similar thoughts in Indian philosophy about death. Indian

philosophy has considered the concept of death in minute details. But we are not concerned with the philosophical intricacies of the same nor are we concerned with the conflicting views expressed in the various systems of Indian philosophy. Though there are some systems of thought which do not believe in the Vedic and Upanisadic line of thinking, majority of systems of Indian philosophy are dominated by the Upanisadic thoughts, from which has emanated the famous system of the Vedant.

This system believes in the Brahman as the ultimate principle that underlies this universe. It also believes in God who is supposed to be the creator of the universe. It also believes in souls and their rebirth. It propounds that the body and the soul are not permanently united with each other. The body is only temporary home of the soul. When it becomes unfit for its residence the soul departs from it and goes to another body. He, however, carries with him certain subtle subliminal impressions which determine his existence in the next birth and body. This explains the fact of difference between the character of one individual and another or one creature and another. The soul will not necessarily pass from only one human body to another human body. It may pass into a subhuman or a super human body and vice-versa. All that depends upon how much the soul is attached to the body in a particular existence. That is why Indian philosophy harps on detachment or at least absence of excessive attachment to the material pleasures. The soul must

always remember, though it does not do so, that it is essentially different from the body. The aim before the soul is to emancipate itself from the shackles of the body. The body always tries to keep the soul within its clutches and the soul always tries to escape and fly away, Liberation (permanent separation from the body) is the ultimate goal of human life.

The body is made up of five elements, the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the space. Each and every body is conglomeration of these elements, and dissolution of these from each other means death. This is the theory of death in Indian Philosophy.

In India the body after death is cremated and hence the process of dissolution is quick and immediate. In other countries the system of burial prevails and the process of dissolution is comparatively slow. It is this reason perhaps that not only Dylan Thomas but also many English Poets such as Donne feel the existence of the dead. According to Indian philosophy Death is as natural as Birth. Both the events are inevitable and one should learn neither to rejoice too much over birth nor to be despondant over death.

Thus birth and death are natural processes. They are only changes in form, and this cycle goes on eternally.

जातस्यहि ध्रुवो मृत्युः ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च /

(Gita - 2:27)

Indian philosophy believes in rebirth. Rebirth has also a moral consideration behind it. The soul is eternal and imperishable while the body is perishable, and changing. So when the soul leaves one body it must go to another body. Just as we give up old clothes and put new ones -

वातांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि /
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा -
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही //

(Gita 2 : 22)

This shifting of bodies goes on till the dead weight of the Karmans performed in the past lives is not fully exhausted. When it is exhausted the soul becomes free once and for all. The Karma is binding, especially the Karman i.e.; associated with passions, desires. Karman done with a desireless frame of mind (निष्काम कर्म) creates no bondage for the soul. This is the theory of karma in Indian Philosophy.

This can be profitably compared with Dylan Thomas's idea of resurrection. Dylan Thomas also takes the similar moral view of resurrection using religious images as in "A saint about to fall " or "over Sir John's hill " etc. According to Indian Philosophy since there is rebirth and since it is determined by the good or bad Karman that we perform in this life one would be

naturally induced to do good acts so that one will have happiness in the next birth. We see around us that some persons are happily situated and others unhappily. This is due to their past actions. There is no other explanation for this. Hence whatever action might have been done by one in the past lives as a result of which one has to suffer sorrow and misery in this life, one will naturally feel like doing good in this life for a happy future. This is the moral influence of the theory of Karman and it goes a long way in improving the world. This is akin to the original Biblical theory of Adam and Eve who were immortal in the beginning but who were subjected to death because they ate the fruit of the tree, which of course signifies the worldly life of pleasures and pains.

Thus there is so much in common between the concept of death of Dylan Thomas's poetry and Death in Indian philosophy. This is, however, only an outline of the comparison. This itself can be a subject of an independent research.