
INTRODUCTION

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When I was completing my course of B.A., a poem of Dylan Thomas was prescribed to us in the second year. The poem is one of the greatest poems by Thomas: "The force that through the green fuse". The poem fascinated me so much that I read it many times, though I could hardly understand the full meaning of the poem.

The same case was with his readers in England and America. His books of verse, right from the beginning, aroused much excitement. His poems with their musicality and startling imagery attracted his readers. But after the spell of music and rhetoric was over, they were confused by the obscurity of the poems. His detractors found only incoherence in his poetry. His sudden death made him more controversial. Both his life and poetry became subject of criticism and admiration. His death produced a lot of tributes in prose and verse and thus Dylan Thomas became a legend. G.S. Fraser writes: "He was one of the two or three poets of his time whose name, like that of Mr. Eliot or Mr. Auden, was familiar to the man in the street."

About ten years after his death some critical works with exhaustive commentary appeared on Dylan Thomas. They try to reveal the mystery of his poetic gift. Among them Elder Olson, Derek Stanford, Henry Treece, W.Y. Tindall, John Ackerman, Ralph Maud, W.T. Moynihan, such and other critics have contributed greatly. The obscurity of the poems of Dylan Thomas, however, remained a

challenge. Each critic studied the poetry of Dylan Thomas from his own point of view.

All these critics have studied various aspects of the poetry of Dylan Thomas. They have studied the poems that deal with the concept of death also. Yet there is no specific work on the theme of death only. The theme of death comes with other concepts in the works of the critics.

There have been various interpretations of Dylan Thomas's concept of death. An attempt has been made here to show the development of the concept of death in the poetry of Dylan Thomas. There are various stages in human life as well as other living and non-living things which reveal the existence of death. Thomas shows the development of his concept of death, as he sees it from various angles.

In this work his view expressed in his letters and the views of other critics are used to substantiate Dylan Thomas's view as expressed in his verse. The grouping of the poems is based on different aspects of death. The poems on the theme of death, published in Collected Poems 1934-52 have been seriously considered here.

This being a library research, all the necessary literary and critical publications relating to the topic have been used. The appreciation of the technique and music etc. is passed over. Similarly comparison with the poems of other poets is as far as

possible avoided in order to confine to the scope of the topic. The approach to the poetry of Dylan Thomas is from the view point of the interpretation of the poems on the concept of death. Thus the development of the concept of death is studied here with the meaning conveyed through the poems.

As the bibliography viz., Dylan Thomas in Print by Ralph Maud shows, there has been considerable critical work on the poetry of Dylan Thomas, published in the forms of books and articles. However it has been very difficult to collect all the published criticism. Nevertheless, the most significant critical works as given in the bibliography have been studied here before the preparation of the dissertation.

Broadly the work has been distributed in four chapters. In the first one the life and work of Dylan Thomas is introduced. In the second chapter the influences on Thomas's attitude to death are shown and various themes of his poems are introduced. The third chapter is devoted to the development of the concept of death in various stages from various angles as the poet sees it. The fourth chapter concludes the argument.

An attempt has been made here to find out the meanings of the poems from the view point of the development of the theme of death in the poetry of Dylan Thomas.