

CHAPTER - III

CHARACTERIZATION

C H A P T E R - III

I

Male and female characters in Synge :

Synge was obsessed with the strange, mysterious and solitary life on the Aran islands and with the simple men and women gifted with the faculty of rich imagination. He wanted to present a full tragic pattern of life where the men and women live in perfect harmony with the nature and the society. No personal element, therefore, is introduced, even by implication in the portrayal of his characters. With enough mastery of art he portrays his characters with objective detachment. In his treatment of male and female characters he gives them equal justice. Neither of them is shown to be superior to other. In their own sphere they are equally important and perform the role which is bestowed on them by the Nature.

There are some traits which, both his male and female characters share in common. In the first place, all the characters are superstitious. They believe in ghosts and fairies and in witchcraft. Michael James, the publican, dares not to return from the funeral at night, on the way where are the rocks on the seashore, called significantly the stooks of the Dead women. Maurya has vision of Michael, her recently drowned son, riding on grey pony behind Bartley, riding on a red mare. Cathleen has the same vision when she looks out of the

window. They have a premonition of Bartley's death which is confirmed. Maurya compares her vision with that of Bride Dara who has 'seen the dead man with the child in his arms'¹. No other character in the play doubts the validity of her vision.'

Moreover, all the characters, that is men and women in Synge's plays are equally conscious of their surrounding circumstances. They are acutely aware of their isolation from the big world. They are far off from the modern civilization and therefore they retain the primitive quality of their existence.

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i) Male Characters :

Synge's male characters are masculine. They carry on their traditional occupations for living. They are the farmers and the fisherman. They are the tinkers and the tramps. They work hard, for bread and know every way a man can put food in his mouth.

All the male characters are social and friendly in their dealings with each other. They attend the wake and the marriage ceremony. They are God fearing people and respect law and order. But they are kind enough to sympathise with anybody who come to ask for shelter. That is why, Christy is offered protection from the peelers. They live in fantasy and love courage and valour. Christy is held hero out of their worship of

courage and valour. But they cannot tolerate the unjust bloodshed for nothing. Their sympathy is more for the suffering human beings. They cannot sympathise with a criminal because crime is after all a crime. And they know the difference between crime and fantasy.

All the male characters observe bourgeois morality. They believe in marriage and are not willing to break the marriage ties. They may have a secret love for other women, as nature would have it, but they return to their respective wives. For example, Martin Doul has a love for Molly. But in the end he is reconciled with his wife, Mary. It is striking, that Dan Burke drives Nora out of house. But there is a sufficient reason behind his action. He suspects that Nora has secret relations with other young farmers. Marriage is always regarded as a sacred rite. The case of Sarah Casey and Michael Byrne is exceptional as they are the social outcasts and do not believe in marriage institution. They observe their own philosophy of life, while the other characters observe social morality.

It does not mean that the male characters are unmanly and submissive. In all respects they exhibit manliness. For example, Bartley chooses to go to the sea inspite of the danger of accident. He is prompted by his manly ego to face the danger.

The ~~xxx~~ relationship between male and female

characters is normal and natural. Unlike Strindberg's male characters, the characters of Synge are not torn in the conflict of sexes. Strindberg's male characters are also masculine but they suffer from unmanliness in their relation with the women. They found themselves helpless in their relation with the female characters. In Synge's play's there is no such conflict of sexes and the male characters never find themselves helpless in their relation with the women. Rather, they respect women and protect them from dishonour by all means. Woman is their prestige point. For example, when Naisi marries Deirdre, it becomes his responsibility to protect her honour. When Conchubor says,

"I've come to look on Deirdre"²,

Naisi angrily retorts :

"Look on her. You're a kn^acky fancier, and it's well you close the one you'd lure from Alban. Look on her , I tell you, and when you've looked I've got ten fingers will squeeze your mottled goose neck, though you're king itself"³.

When Martin Doul indecently begins to court Molly Byrne, Timmy the smith comes forward to defend her honour. He says,

"It's well you know a decent girl ,I'm thinking to wed, has no right to have her heart scalded with hearing talk - and queer , bad talk, I'm thinking from

a raggy - looking fool the like of you"⁴.

He threatens Martin saying that, "It's well you know Timmy the Smith has great strength in his arm, and it's a power of things it has broken a sight hafder than the old bone of your skull"⁵.

Young men are passionate in their love and are a bit of a poet. They talk poetry and are ready to do anything to win the love of their beloved. They are the self - respecting people and are taken to arms once confronted with injustice. Their physical strength looms large almost on the verge of violence.

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ii) Female Characters :

The characteristic feature of Synge's characterization is that his female characters are shown to be the protagonists. In both the tragedies viz. Riders to the Sea and Deirdre of the Sorrows, Maurya and Deirdre are the protagonists respectively. In comedies as well, the female characters are the protagonists. The Playboy of the Western World is a comedy but it is a tragedy for Pegeen as she has lost the only 'Playboy of the Western World'. Nora, in The Shadow of the Glen and Sarah Casey in The Tinkers' Wedding are doomed to frustration. Mary Doull in The Well of the Saints, suffers, much due to Martin's hearted towards her.

If we compare Synge's female characters with that of Shakespeare's female characters, we will come to know that in Synge's vision of life the female characters hold much the significant position. In Shakespeare, the female characters always play a subordinate role. In Maflow, there is no place for female characters at all. Synge alone gives them full justice and equal importance in the pattern of life. His female characters are independent in spirit, self-confident, clear-headed, morally courageous and emotionally well controlled.

But Synge is not the champion of the emancipated woman. His female characters believe in marriage and in motherhood to be their proper duty and life-work. All their activities are centred around their family. Their desires and dreams are very common to that of the women of the orient. His female characters are beautiful but simple in appearance. They are decent and hard women. They do not try to excite the emotions of men.

Synge has drawn a variety of categories of female characters ranging from the old women to the young girls. The old women, middle - aged women, widows and the young girls represent every phase of their feelings. The old women are concerned with the welfare of their children. Willingly, they hand over the household affairs to their young daughters. They are the mothers only at this stage. The old age has brought to them wisdom and they tender advice to the young girls, and boys. But as usual,

the young ones do not take heed of their wise saying. For example, Maurya advises Bartley not to go to the sea. But he must go. Lavarcham, an old woman, kept in the service of Deirdre, assumes the role of her mother. She helps Deirdre at every turn of her life. The middle-aged women like Nora, try their best to keep up the family life. The widows are after seeking a husband and a happy family life. The women demand no other thing but the happy married life. The husband and children is all that they want. They do not complain the hardships of life.

The young girls are gay and dreamy . They dream of a hero to be their life-mate. The young girls are morally courageous but somewhat irrational in their behaviour . In matter of love they are more strong and take a lead. The common conventional belief is that man seeks and pursues and masters the woman he desires to marry. In Synge, the young girls seek out and master the man they desire to marry. Deirdre seeks Naisi and marries him . Pegeen, out of her worship of daredevil chooses to marry Christy and is bold and frank enough to tell her father about her decision.

The young girls are faithful to themselves . They do not submit themselves either to force or to wealth. Deirdre marries Naisi, even if he cannot provide her with a nice house. She prefers the tent to Conchubor's palace only for the sake of her love for Naisi. Thus, the female characters do not accept the old theatrical role of a woman

who allows herself to be quarrelled over by two men and passively disposed off to either the one or the other. Like Shaw's Candida, they impose their own will on the men and choose their life-mate by themselves.

Synge's female characters are stout and hardy. They are strong enough to carry on the household affairs. Cathleen manages the household and her old mother and her young brother and sister. She is able to deal with the dealers independently. 'Pegeen manages the public-house of her father'. In spite of all these plus points, the female characters are doomed to loneliness and frustration. Maurya's only living son, Bartley, is drowned and she is left alone with her daughters to mourn. 'Nora's married life is broken and she is forced to leave the protection of her husband's house. Pegeen's dream is shattered and she loses her lover. Sarah's hopes of marriage and of decent life are gravely upset. Nevertheless, the women have the power of resistance. In the face of hardships and sufferings they are more courageous. Deirdre commits suicide instead of surrendering herself to Conchubor's evil desires.

Synge's male and female characters are of blood and flesh. They are presented as they really are, struggling for life. They drink but they are not drunkards; they are beggars but they do not lose self respect;

they work hard for living but they are not mad after wordly things. They are cut away far from the big world but they do not lose the poetry in life and are not cut away from the universal human feelings. Struggling, fighting, weeping and love making they fulfil the cup of life with all its vigour.

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II

Characters in Tragedy

Aristotle recommended that the personages in tragedy must be better than we are and that the change in the hero's fortune must be from happiness to misery and that the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part. In Greek theatre, accordingly, the actor was representing a kind of a hero and spoke with great majestic words of the poet. He necessarily induced awe and a sense of being above even as he fell. The tradition was followed in Seneca as also. His main characters are the men in high places. For the first time, Shakespeare breaks down this tradition and makes a mere general his hero in Othello. Similar compromises with greatness are common in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. Still, they are only compromises. The hero is normally a king or a prince, either by right of birth or through conquest or usurpation, as in Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Shakespeare's Macbeth, or he is a man who in other ways wins peculiar power, as in Doctor Faustus.

Things were different in Ireland when Synge presented his Riders to the Sea and Deirdre of the Sorrows and achieved that core of tragedy which is 'the tragic sense of life.' Synge's concept of tragedy and his characters in tragedy makes a departure from

the traditional framework of tragedy and a tragic hero respectively. In his tragedies he has presented the full tragic pattern of life. For the first time, he introduces in his tragedies the characters, which were thought of to be out of the sphere of tragedy. His tragic characters are the men and women of the poverty stricken West of Ireland, whose knowledge of the interplay of death and life ^{he} ~~is~~ shared intimately!

'The most striking thing about his tragedies is that the conventional place of the tragic hero is occupied by the female characters. The women are the protagonists in his tragedies.' The king and the princes are introduced in Deirdre of the Sorrows but their role is subordinated to the role of Deirdre, a simple beautiful girl. Conchubor, the king, is not the tragic hero. Rather, he is reduced to a secondary, almost villainous role. Deirdre is the real protagonist.

The plot of the play is drawn upon the heroic legend but Synge gave the substance of Irish life to his characters. In this heroic tragedy he amplifies the motifs of love, longing and laments over the transience of youth and beauty. Love and conflict between the two groups of great warriors and the love triangle between Deirdre, Naisi and Conchubor is successfully presented. He presents his themes in such a way as to bring out his tragic vision of life in the character of Deirdre. He handles his material so as to make the character of

Beirdre vital and concrete.

The story is foreseen . But Deirdre seems to have no bearing of what is foreseen. She is dreamy, independent and arrogant young girl, always having her ownway. Like Helen of Troy she is destined to bring about a doom on the sons of Usna. But inspite of her knowledge of the destruction she is to bring on the sons of Usna she falls in love, with Naisi at first sight. Her love is neither extra-ordinary nor articulate. Synge shows us that she dreams of a man who has hair like the raven, and his skin white and lips blood red. She indulges in a dream any young girl would indulge in.

By her own free will she chooses to marry Naisi. In spite of Conchubor's force and Lavarcham's attempts to persuade her from marrying Naisi, independently she chooses her life-mate. She has a courage to go against Conchubor. Her love is strong and she has no desire either for wealth or for power. She does what her heart asks her to do. And going against the king she has sown the seeds of tragedy. But her decision cannot be taken as a tragic fault as it is the proper decision any young girl in love would have taken.

Naisi is fearless young man and dares to go against the king. He marries Deirdre not out of sympathy or for stirring the king, but because he also falls in love with Deirdre. His love is strong and sincere. And this young, brave and handsome hunter, frustrates Conchubor's evil

desire, in choosing to marry Deirdre. Conchubor's ego is stirred. He becomes restless and is after seeking a plan to win Deirdre. He is a king and cannot tolerate defeat. He is not in a state to accept his defeat with philosopher's calmness. The vanity of his position does not allow him to remain quiet and he becomes blind with passion and revenge.

At this point, the emotional set up of every major character is picked up by Synge. The sequence of events which is in accordance with the emotional working of the characters, is brought to the point where the most subtle human emotions are set up in motion. The emotional excitement of Deirdre and Naisi and the Passion and jealousy of Conchubor is heightened to a great level. The emotional triangle is reached at a peak from where it is to take a reverse twist, which brings nothing but death and desolation. Herein lies Synge's art of characterization. The fact that they feel and respond to the call of heart is the first step of their development towards vitality. Synge touches the very subtle core of human mind, almost every shade of it.

Now Conchubor puts forward a friendly proposal to Naisi and invites him to Emain. Fergus gives his message to Naisi. He is deceived by the outward show of friendliness. He has no means to ascertain the reality. Fergus is quite ignorant of the consequences of his action and convinces Naisi that there is no danger to them in Emain. Therefore, Fergus is not responsible for the tragedy

that takes place in Emain. And Conchubor has his revenge. His men kill Naisi and his brothers treacherously. What is foretold comes out true. Then Conchubor begs Deirdre for love. But once again he is defeated. Deirdre prefers death to conchubor's amorous embrace. Once again, the character of Deirdre shines forth with vitality.

Synge has made these characters alive by showing that the seeds of tragedy lie in the fallibility of human emotions. Neither fate nor circumstances are wholly responsible for the tragedy. The characters act on their own prompted by their desires and emotions. Deirdre could have prevented the deaths. Seven years before, she has defeated her fate by choosing to go to Alban. With the same determination she could have prevented Naisi from going to Emain. She was in a position to influence Naisi. Moreover, she was aware of conchubor's evil nature. What compelled her to go to Emain?

Too many probabilities are there; that the fate dominates her will-power or; that she ceases to think or, that she believes in Conchubor's friendly promise. But there is no such thing. The tragedy springs from her frustrated feelings of love. She overhears Naisi and is utterly disappointed. Seven years before she was courageous^{to} face the destructive forces in her life. She wished to live the life of her heart's desire. The vision of life and love proved more strong. She resolved to defend her fate by all means. But now the spirit of life in her is dried up. She feels

that Naisi has lost his interest in her and that the power of her beauty and love is no more. Her intense love for Naisi and her beauty is the mainspring of her existence. Once it dried up she loses her interest in life too and allows the course of life to run at its discretion.

Deirdre fails to face the reality. The human fallibility of judgement and weakness destroys her. She submits to the fate. More than that she thinks about Naisi's happiness. She thinks that Naisi must have his freedom and his own life. In the end fate dominates her. But her own peculiarly human weakness has brought the tragedy.

In Riders to the Sea there is no such foretale but death is foreseen. The characters are inevitably driven by fate to the sea of death. But Maurya, the protagonist, does not surrender to fate passively. She fights with her fate determined by the sea with all the vigour of life. Her attempts to reverse the course of her fate makes her alive. Maurya is an old woman, utterly grief stricken due to the number of deaths she has witnessed, of her sons and her husband and her father-in-law. Her life is a sort of life-long battle with the sea and every time she is defeated. The force of her enemy is more strong than the force of life with which she is equipped. She is aware of her helplessness and weakness in the face of the terrible power of the sea but she does not cease to fight with it.

Maurya is a mother and therefore tries her best for the safety of her son, Bartley. She persuades him from going to the sea. She cannot literally fight with the sea but can at least prevent Bartley from going to the sea. But who would listen to an old mother ? Bartley's decision to go to the sea is businesslike. There is no heroic gesture or rhetorical flourish in his decision. He thinks that,

"the fair will be a good fair for horses"⁶.

Maurya vehemently refutes his claim and says,

"If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only"⁷

Maurya's fears are real. She has attained the knowledge of death through her lifelong struggle with the sea. She has a vision of death in Michael. It is a ~~xxi~~ vision of reality. In death all men are alike. Though her vision of death is shown in terms of supernatural occurrence, Synge has made it clear that the supernatural forms the part of their common experience. Cathleen has the same vision. No other character in the play doubts the validity of her vision.

But in spite of her clear vision of death, she blames herself for not giving her blessing to Bartley. Like all other human beings she believes in the power of

blessing and prayers, the only weapons which are too weak to reverse the course of fate. And when she meets with the final blow of fortune, she feels at rest for a while. Now, the sea can do no more harm to her. But the courage and philosophic bent of mind is only temporary. She is ^{crushed}~~curse~~d under the sorrow. Her senses are blurred. She remembers all her dead sons. In her imagination she transforms them into fallen ^{heroes}~~horses~~. They are all one in death. She laments tragically over their death.

In this tragedy, Synge does not seek outhuman suffering with the intention of being moved by it. The play signifies the universal tragic vision of life. And the character of Maurya is fit in this tragic pattern of life. Her keening articulates the suppressed feelings of ^g~~rae~~ conditioned by the hostility of nature to man. She transcends the personal grief and strikes the note of universal grief . She regrets because the course of life is turned upside down in hef case. Instead of the young men burying the old, it is she, the old ~~man~~ mother is left alive to bury her young sons. Fate dominates all the characters. There is no tragic flaw inthem. They pray, they hope and entrust everything to God's mercy.

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III

Characters in Comedy

Lord Byron brings out the difference between tragedies and comedies in the following words:

All tragedies are finished by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage⁸.

Synge's tragedies end in death but his comedies do not end in marriage. His concept of comedy is quite different in that he presents the tragic and the comic side by side in his comedies. Freud thinks that laughter produces cathartic effect. But Synge does not desire to produce cathartic effect, rather he wishes to present a full tragic pattern of life and thereby in turn to present a happy vision of life. In this connection Una Ellis Fermor's observation is noteworthy, she says,

His tragedies are untouched by comedy; relief, in them, comes, as with the Greeks, in poetry, and the relief of poetic thought grows more comprehensive as we go from the hard condensation of the early Riders to the Sea to the wide and sunny beauty of Deirdre. But his comedies are either a frank mixture of the two elements ^{or} ~~or~~ such laughter as trembles always on the verge of tragedy, and the intimacy of the blending becomes subtler, more bewildering, as we go from the simple contrasts and balances of The Shadow of the Glen through The Well of

the Saints and The Tinker's Wedding to The playboy of the Western World⁹.

Life is neither utterly tragic nor is it purely happy. It is a fine mixture of joys and sorrows. This realistic attitude is very well projected by Synge in the portrayal of his characters in comedy, and therefore, pathos is occasionally called for. There is suffering but the characters appeal more to our comic senses than to the tragic awareness of life. In fact, his comedies are tragedies with a comic undertone of relief in them.

The characters in Synge's tragedies represent a tragic vision of life. On the contrary, the characters in comedy represent a happy vision of life. They are not comic in themselves. But the fact that they overcome the miseries of life and seek happiness wherever they find it and that they are able to see the happy vision of life which is to be called comic, makes them comic characters. Occasionally, they produce the comic laughter but they are not farcical. They are acutely aware of the miseries of life but the intensity of their tragic passion is curtailed by the spirit with which they approach the tragic situation. Therefore, the characters in Synge's comedies can well be called 'tragi-comic' characters.

The characters in Synge's comedies are not isolated individuals. Therefore, they do not represent a type. Rather, they are nearer to ordinary existence. They are portrayed

in the context of social life and the social life always tends to limit the mystic contemplation of the universe, and thereby the characters produce a comic vision of life which is true to our ordinary existence. They are social minded people and are very much concerned with the social approval. Nevertheless, they retain their individual identity. They are realistic even though occasionally they indulge in fantasy and illusion. They are presented with sorrows and miseries but they find a way through it. Herein lies Synge's view of comedy and the success of his characterization.

We laugh at their follies, at their absurdities and weaknesses, at their fantasy and illusion but this laughter is not malicious. Rather, it is our instinctive response to the realities of life which we see in them. And such laughter though it is stained with sorrow is very essential in life. Men must laugh and make others laugh as well. 'Laughter is a kind of no man's land between faith and despair. We preserve our sanity by laughing at life's surface absurdities'¹⁰.

Synge values much the sense of humour in life. In his preface to The Tinker's Wedding he says :

In the greater part of Ireland, however, the whole people, from the tinkers to the clergy, have still a life, and view of life, that are rich and genial and humorous. I do not think that these country people, who

have so much humour themselves will mind being laughed at without malice; as the people in every country have been laughed at in their own comedies¹¹.

Thus, the characters in Synge's comedies reveal a sense of humour. Therefore, it is interesting to study how Synge comes to portray them and how they produce the comic effect desired by Synge.

In The shadow of the Glen, Nora is caught between her personal desires and her social status. She is a wife of a farmer and regards the protection of her husband's house more important than any other thing. She is afraid of the life which Peggy Cavanagh, the homeless woman is leading on the road. She feels insecure even when the Tramp assures her that she will have no cause to be thinking of the life of Peggy Cavanagh. She thinks that there is no guarantee that she will not find herself in the same situation. She finds herself quite helpless to escape the crushing impact of loneliness.

She appears to be indifferent towards the death of her husband. But Synge shows that she is not flirtatious. When Michael Dara proposes her for marriage, she seems to be reluctant to accept his proposal. She thinks realistically. She knows well that they would grow weary of each other in the course of time and their marriage would become a loveless affair. Moreover, they cannot escape the miseries of old age and that they

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would be doomed to loneliness. Her passions are restrained. In patch Darcy she sought a companion to talk with.

Inspite of her hard nature Nora ^aleaves the house of her husband and goes along with the Tramp. This decision makes her a concrete and life-like character. The decision is taken at the moment when she is left with no alternative. Rather, she is compelled to leave the house. She feels, she desires and fights with the depressing circumstances of her life. She longs for love and companion as any human being would long for . But she is not willing to sacrifice her social status for her personal cravings. But when the situation works hard\$ on her she takes independent decision in total disregard towards the norms of society. Through tears she is able to see the happy vision of life. She is content with the thought that in the company of the Tramp, she will hear a good talk at least.

There are only four characters in the play. But many other characters are mentioned and they create the atmosphere of society. They are at once individual as well as a part of the society. Their indentity is merged into social awareness . Nevertheless, they are true to themselves. Synge dwells on their thoughts and their feelings in a realistic manner. What they talk and feel is in accord with their respective roles.

Dan Burke is suspicious of his wife Nora. It is

but natural because Nora is young and he is old. He cannot sympathise with her because the role which is bestowed on him by the society is that of the husband. A husband can hardly sympathise with his wife talking to other young men. His hatred towards patch Darcy is also natural and appropriate to his character.

Michael Dara is a poor - spirited young farmer. He dares to propose Nora but when the situation turns on him he declines to protect her. He refuses to marry her. He is pretentious. His feelings for Nora are not real. Michael Dare represents a kind of young men who impress the helpless and lonely women and for selfish considerations exploit them.

In the play, the Tramp is the outsider. He is a stranger but performs his role with sincerity. He is a great wanderer and knows all the people, in the neighbourhood. He has no reason to lie. Therefore, he praises patch Darcy affectionately. His wanderings has brought to him a close knowledge of the life. He knows the transient and miserable human existence. Therefore, he sympathises with any one in misery. His sympathy towards Nora is a sign of his humanity. His offer of protection to Nora is not initiated by immoral feelings. There is real sympathy and real concern in his offer.

Synge's art of portraying these characters lies in the fact that he exploits all the shades of feelings of

his characters, which are true to our existence. He introduces no farcical element for the sake of comic laughter or no melodramatic element is introduced for enhancing the intensity of tragic passion. There is a good and realistic balance between the tragic and the comic. The fluctuations of emotions, the dreams and the despair, the frustration and reassurance of his characters is very well picked up by Synge.

In The well of the Saints once again individual characters are portrayed against the social background. Martin and Mary Doul are the main characters in the play. The characters around them, from a society, which is responsible for their tragedy. But Synge has portrayed these characters in such a way as to retain their individual identity. In the end, they arrive at a decision to go to the cities in the south. The other characters play much the significant role in the development of main characters.

Martin and Mary Doul are introduced at a point where both of them are in a state of perfect happiness. Mary Doul has created a world of illusion around herself and involves Martin in it. She tells him grand lies of her beauty. Martin is realistic and wants to assure the truth. But his doubts are abolished. The ~~some~~ people tell Martin grand lies about Mary's beauty. They take delight in playing with the emotions of the blind beggars. Martin is reassured of her beauty and is very happy.

But suddenly, the circumstances change . He meets with disillusionment. The saint cures them of their eyesight. Martin sees the ugly and wrinkled face of Mary Doul. The people as well as the saint fails to understand and sympathise with Martin Doul. Rather, they continue to play with his emotions. Molly Byrne sits in the place of Mary Doul. Martin is deceived. There is really something very tragic about the intensity of his passion for beauty.

Martin is a lover and a poet. He is the worshipper of beauty. He is attracted towards Molly Byrne. She becomes the source of his inspiration. But Molly changes. She puts out that light of inspiration. She reminds Martin that he is making love with a girl who is above him socially. Martin finds himself in the midst of gathering darkness in his total humiliation. He sees the villainy of a woman. He experiences the bloody strength of the men in Timmy the smith. The world becomes a miserable place for him. But the tragic sense of life is brilliantly transformed into comic vision of life.

Now Martin and Mary Doul create another illusion. They discover the fantasy of white hair. They are relaxed and gain a serene happiness in the beauty of nature. Martin is a dreamer with a longing for the beautiful. The illusion of beauty is necessary to him to protect his ego against the ugliness and mediocrity of his situation. But in the end he abandons his illusion and accepts reality. His voluntary choice of blindness represents

a deliberate attempt to retain his inner feelings of dignity and his sense of isolation from the seeing people.

The role of the other characters is portrayed with equal justice to their respective roles. Mary DouL is concerned much with the happiness of her husband. She is jealous of the other women that come around Martin. Molly Byrne is beautiful and attractive but she is shown to be flirtatious. She takes delight in playing with Martin. Indirectly, she given him response. For example, she says,

"It's a fine way you're wanting to pay Timmy the smith And it's not his lies you're making love to this day, Martin DouL"¹².

Molly is vain and is acutely aware of her social position. She is afraid when the situation goes beyond her control. She fears that some other beggar would dare to propose her for marriage. She is young and takes delight in playing the game of love. But she chooses to marry. Timmy the smith, her equal in all respects. There is contrast between Mary DouL and Molly Byrne. Molly is really beautiful but her beauty makes her snobbish. Mary is ugly and she wants beauty for the sake of self-respect.

Martin and Mary DouL retain their individual identity against the mob mentality. The people condemn them in the end. They do not hesitate to throw things at them.

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They are afraid that Martin's refusal to be cured of their eyesight would bring a curse upon them. They said,

"Go on now, Martin Doul. Go on from this place. Let you not be bringing great stroms or droughts on us may be from the power of the Lord"¹³.

The same social force plays the similar role in The Tinker's Wedding and The Playboy of the Western World. Una Ellis Fefmor describes The Playboy of the Western World very accurately saying that "the life, aspirations and frustration of a whole country - side is in the play"¹⁴. Further she says that it "takes for its main theme the growth of fantasy in a mind or a group of minds"¹⁵.

Christy Mahon is turned into a hero by the fantasy of the people around him. He conceives exaggerated notions about himself at due to their admiration of his deed. He is amused when pegeen and Widow Quin quarrel over him. He blames himself for not having killed his father the year gone by. He realises his strength and emerges as a courageous young gallant. All his hidden powers find an outlet in the sports below and he wins all the prizes. Christy is raised to the state of utmost joy. His joy and confidence is unlimited now. Therefore, he asks boldly for pegeen's hand. Michael James seems no harm in their marriage. But suddenly Christy is brought down to the earth. His father, old Mahon comes and he is

exposed. Pegeen loses interest in him. People hold him as a criminal. He is frustrated.

Synge shows that Christy is playfully treated by the people. They elevate him to a level of a hero and then lowered him down as a criminal. His real personality is clouded by the fluctuating mob mentality. But in the end he shines forth as an independent individual. He becomes the master of the situation. He dominates his father and decides to go on "romancing through a romping life-time"¹⁶.

Christy's development from a shy and timid fellow to the hero is comic. His exaggeration of his deed, his overconfidence about pegeen's love and his musings over his luck all appears to be comic. Because we know that his father is not dead. Pegeen is very hard girl and frail. In the end, people's fantasy is shattered and he is not that lucky fellow. Every action of Christy up to the end appears to be absurd. In a letter to the young playwright Synge wrote about Christy;

"I fancy when you read the play or see it performed in more possible conditions - you will find Christy Mahon more interesting than you are inclined to do now. Remember on the first production of a play the most subtle characters always tend to come out less strongly than the simple characters, because those who act the more subtle parts

can do no more than feel their way until they have acted the whole play a number of ~~items~~^{times}¹⁷.

Pegeen is a very hard girl to please. She has a fancy for heroism. She is engaged with shawn Keogh but she has no special feelings for him, Christy is a hero in her eyes. She falls in love with him, Christy is a hero in her eyes. She falls in love with him. She is jealous of the other girls who come around Christy. But when Christy is exposed, she loses her interest in him. Her lose of interest in him is natural because she feels that she is deceived. Her fantasy is shattered. She is filled with disgust when christy strikes his father in the presence of all men and herself. Her feelings of frustration are so intense that she does not hesitate to scorch him. She appears to be frail. But she does not know what she really wants. Her worship of heroism and her awareness of reality shatters her. When Christy goes, she cries out;

"oh, my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only playboy of the Western World"¹⁸.

Shown keogh and Widow Quin create comic laughter. Shaw is a timid and God fearing fellow. He is engaged with pegeen. But he does not dare to stay alone with pegeen at night time. It is unbecoming and unusual on the part of young man engaged to a beautiful girl. Therefore, his reluctance to stay with pegeen appears to be absurd and hence we laugh at his absurdity. Moreover, there is nothing

heroic and manly about him. He takes the coward's way to keep christy away from pegeen. He tries to bribe Widow Quin to persuade christy from marrying pegeen. He has no daring to fight with christy, his rival in love and therefore, he tries to bribe christy too. When Michael James asks him to fight with Christy, he hesitates. He does not dare to take a lay and fight with christy. All his actions are unmanly and we laugh at his weaknesses. He is far from the normal young man. His moral considerations, his fears of God and his womanish way of dealing with christy is not fit for a young man and therefore he appears to be a comic character.

Widow Quin is the most practical woman. She plays the double role and always takes the side which would prove to be profitable to her. She wants to marry christy. Therefore, when Shawn asks for her help to keep away Christy from pegeen she becomes very happy. Gladly she promises to help him. But she does not quit her business-like nature. She demands from Shawn Keogh, the red cow and the mounting ram, and the right of way and a load of dung at Michaelmas, and turbarry upon the Western hill. Her demands are too many. We are aware of her selfish nature. She takes the advantage of other people's helplessness and this scared vision of life makes us laugh. But she fails to persuade christy from marrying pegeen. Her own desire to marry him is frustrated. But she keeps up her spirit. She tends to make the best of the situation. Therefore, when christy asks for her help to win pegeen,

she demands the same things from Christy also which she demands from Shawn. Her practical way of life, her business like approach to every situation create comic laughter.

The other characters in the play, perform similar significant roles. The development of Christy is not independent. He finds his way to heroism only through the admiration of other people. Moreover, Shawn Keogh's timidity adds to his image as a hero. The other characters rather form a chorus and give their judgement on his actions.

The main characters in The Tinker's Wedding are violent and irrational. They talk of murder and bloodshed at the door of the chapel. Sarah Casey, in her dream of marriage, crosses the limits of convention of her community. She is a romantic and hard girl. She has her own free-will and imposes her desire on other characters. The plot of the play is very simple. But Synge shows that all the characters are vital and true and their own self.

Sarah Casey is a tinker girl and the tradition of free love of tinker community makes her hard and sturdy. Her emotions are unrestricted. She has a great power to persuade the priest and Michael. She does her best to bring her dream into reality. She is almost on the verge of violence when she comes to know Mary's treachery. She finds no harm in accusing the priest. She is almost

mad when the priest refuses to wed them and would not hesitate to hit him.

For the development of this character Synge manages to show her emotional excitement. With the change of moon she gets excited. Her ^{mo}emotional intensity is reached at a peak when they arrive at the door of chapel. But once she meets with frustration all her hidden powers springs on the surface. She becomes almost violent and in her anger she crosses the limits of decency. Her desire for decent married life and her indecent violence clashes and her true character comes out. The outward snows of decency and restraint fades away in the face of frustrating situation.

Michael Byrne is very rash and violent young tinker. He believes his mother but dares not go against Sarah. He wishes to please her by all means. He is jealous of Jaunting Jim, the other young tinker. Therefore, he agrees to go through the marriage ritual only to please Sarah. His love for Sarah is strong and he is not willing to let her go to Jaunting Jim. Michael is a self-respecting young man and cannot tolerate the accusation. Therefore, he does not hesitate to come to blows with the priest.

Mary Burne is the main comic character in the play. She is an old, dirty and drunken tinker woman, But she is jovial and maternal in her attitude. She is quite

innocent and seems no harm in her request to the priest for a private prayer-show. She creates comic laughter when she soothes the priest. She is not concerned with the dignity and the holy position of the priest and treats him like a child.

The priest is vain and is acutely aware of his high social status. He shows no interest in the quarrel between Mary and Sarah. He remains indifferent towards their desires and feelings. He agrees to perform the marriage rite only for the sake of ten shillings in gold and a can. But when he sees empty bottles in the place of a can, he feels annoyed. He regrets having dealt with the tinkers. But he is very timid. When Michael pulls him down and they gauge him with a sack he promises them that he would not tell to the peelers of their villainy. He wants to save himself, in the first place, from the violent tinkers. Though he is a priest, he shows no sense of duty. He regards his holy position more as a profession than a life mission.

In this play, Synge presents two groups of different societies. Their mutual misunderstanding of the lifestyle of each other create comic laughter. The indifference of the tinkers towards the priest's holy position and the church is real and in the face of the priest it appears to be comic. Moreover, the priest's Vanity and his selfishness and his outward show of sincerity create comic laughter.

In the end, it may be said that the characters in Synge's comedies create humour which is based on the vision of reality, and which the average man takes daily for granted and delights to see illustrated and affirmed. They do not merely amuse us but foster the recreation which is the ultimate goal of art.

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