

Drama and Real Life

Life consists of human activity, the highest object of which is man. Art and literature are the branches of Knowledge, inseparable from life. In them we can discern a deep and lasting human significance. Literature, drama being a part of it, grows directly out of life and brings us into large, close and fresh relations with life. Greater the association the more will be the worth of that literature. It is a sort of vital record of what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is the fundamental expression of life through the medium of language. This expression is further moulded into various literary forms, and drama being the imitation of life with an occasional modification has a significant association. It is life itself, so to say, a reflection true to everyday life. Drama reflects the great drama of life itself and offers us a true sight of life, true and mirror-like. The colouring of imagination that the artist gives takes its shades from life itself. Our interest in people, their doings and also in our world finds expression in that which recaptures this urge and presents it as it is. The self expression of the dramatist includes a great deal of our own thoughts and feelings which are again akin to life, so he is not a different character. "The personality of the dramatist is merged in the depiction of life, and the mirror" says Hudson, "which the artist holds up to the world about him, is of necessity the mirror of his own personality". It may mean the instinct of originality but this originality implies genius and not newness. The origin of drama has its ingredients in mimicry, a natural instinct of man. Man tries to enter vividly into the situation, sentiments and progress of others and puts on a semblance of them in his gestures. A child has a great tendency to represent whatever he has seen in his elders or around him and whatever strikes his fancy or whatever he can imagine. Similarly the dramatist has to indulge in the same practices; the field extending from the whole life of the universe to a capacity to deposit whatever he chooses. Generally the dramatist has to separate parts of social life, and to present them to itself again in one collectiveness. The central point is life of man.

In the drama we see man measuring his powers with others as intellectuals and moral beings, either friends or foes, influencing each other for the true enjoyment of life, may be the life itself consists of action. The actions that the dramatist presents are sometimes the renovated pictures of life. Here no narration is required to fill the gaps of conversation, rather the living individuals accompanied by appropriate action and gesture and placed in apt circumstances, are to act and speak for life. This act the dramatis presents to us. They are to have their assumed ranks in life, age and country – locality from which they are all drawn.

The springboard for drama was religion and through religion it penetrated deep into life. It is to say that in the garden-land of religion the sources of dramatic art welled up, dividing into many streams, which widen as they run along, traverse the provinces of life. Many new brooks, flowing from other springs, fall into the main stream and swell its current. Firstly, it might have taken the Divine life as its subject as we find in the dialogues of divine forms in Rig Vedas. Similar is the case with the Greek, Roman and English dramas. The growth of drama is so obvious and natural that in most of the civilized countries of antiquity, the art had been imitated and so great has been the skill that the romantic drama of a very high order like "Shakuntala" could have a lasting effect. How delightful and romantic in its native climate and yet how very much in tune with our day to day life it was! The modernists' psychological approach to life has its seeds in this great creation. Thus we notice that with the advent of civilization, drama with the actual life as its model, holds a first place.

There is another aspect of the question too. Drama as well as literature brings us face to face with the subtle realities of life. We can feel the hold of virtue and vice of life, realize where the shoe pinches, and thus have scope for amendment. The mirror-like view that it yields cannot be misguiding in its accuracy of the realities of life, though the approach may have the licence to advance or reduce their bulk. The drama is to be generally moral in its tone and voice, and not leave behind any suggestion of wickedness. It is to create the impression of the triumph of virtue over vice. Instances may be picked from even the Shakespearean plays where Cordelia might suffer for her virtues but the fact remains that these inconsistencies are a part of life itself. Anyway the point of emphasis is that by bringing before us the virtues and vices of our day to day life, the picture of ours as we are and various aspects of ours or other routine, drama makes us conscious of what life is, where man stands and how the whole thing looks like. It might prepare us for reaction and it is of secondary importance and to take its teachings is our option but it does hold a mirror to life.

In this respect let us look into the growth of English drama in a passing manner to assert our point. The subject of the Miracle plays of the 12th Century, were taken from the legends of the saints and acts ascribed to them, while the Mystery plays had scriptures for their subjects. Their teaching was of a religious nature. The Morality plays, later, actually personified virtues and vices, and though they were not as true to life as were the Interlude in the Revived Era of learning, yet their influence was meant to throw a heavenly light on life. Now the public which showed an interest towards historical studies sought in its drama the treatment of actual human life and affairs. The characters in the Interludes were real men and women, even of English life of the day and these served some purpose. Pageants, Masques and Pantomimes were at a later age, sources of delight

through drama, whatever their nature may be, they echoed those aspects of life, which were amusing and light in their own way.

A similar kinship can be traced in two great branches of drama, that is Classical and Romantic: Classical drama dealt with the great legends of a remote mythological age, say of Greek or Roman Mythology. Its character was above commonplace humanity and experience. Here the scope was enhanced and limited to a sort of definition of life. No attempt to mirror ordinary life, or to reproduce common human nature was ever permitted. So was the case with the Neo-classic concepts of drama. The extraordinary coherence and heightened imagination brought about the Romantic drama in the Elizabethan age and the intermingling of so many lively plots, freedom in respect of time, place and action, religion reflected variety and complexity of actual life for our delight.

The various directions of dramas may also be referred to in support of our contention. The events and incidents in a tragedy really hold a mirror to life, the appeal to the sense of sympathy fills the mind with pity and terror. The chief aims of tragedy are to affect the feeling and to have profound effect on the mind. The ruin of the principal character, the predominating influence of Fate, intense situation all remind us of the subtle realities of life around us. On the other hand, the happy ending of a comedy and the hero's triumph over difficulties and poetic justice teach us delightfully. Same is the case with other kinds of comedies including the tragicomedy. The historical plays can also be associated with this human kinship. On the whole drama as pointed out by Schelge, statesman-generals holding the great event of the past similar to those in which they themselves are called upon to act, lays open their inmost springs and motives. Here too the philosopher finds subjects for profoundest reflection on nature and constitution of man and with curious eyes the artist follows the groups which pass rapidly before him and impresses on his fancy the outlines of every future picture, and the susceptible youth opens his heart to every elevating feelings, age becomes young again in recollections, even child sits with anxious expectations before the grand curtain.

This estimate portrays the influence of drama on life. Whatever the form of drama may be the dramatic circumstances in our daily life seem appropriate to the theatre and it can be remarked that the portrayal of action which is the function of drama is itself an action of life. Drama has a free scope and significance as it depends upon the force and fidelity of the images rather than upon any individual agency. This image of life as a whole has a lasting influence for every taste in the society.

With the pageant of life as its eventual subject, drama as a well made Nature of today has a tendency towards naturalism which is all the more true to life. "This

progressive movement has an all round development in social, intellectual and critical fields, but its most universal quality has been a life-like character. It has been the endeavour of the dramatists to present the outward semblance of life as closely as possible. It is a definite form of art like naturalism in painting and not like that of the photographic art. It never was photographic. The imaginative colouring of Shakespeare of the plays is strictly in the order of painting though the subject was from life. Naturalism is indeed a form of style and gives impetus to the form wanting style." The dramatist says Ashley Dukes, "Who takes pen in hand to portray everyday life in everyday speech must be a writer, a writer in the ten thousand if he is altogether to avoid the rut of ordinary expression. The dramatist is to seek the help of style, if he has to make his individual idiom more homely and if he is to clothe apparent reality in a proper manner."

The personal experience specially that of the writer is predominating in a drama. In ordinary intercourse men, for fear of mistrust or indifference from allowing others to look into what passes within them, exhibit only the outward man to each other, but the dramatist breaking through the conventional barriers, gives intensity to his feelings of the heart. This new tendency had its influence on the English drama in the days when Renaissance had touched it. This unmistakable element of personal character was full of vigour and strength of life.

Continually we catch the echoes of the doubts and fears and hopes that fill the spirit of man in his quest, not of the Gods indeed, or of the riddle of Sphinx, but of himself. The royal figure of Lear, undergoing the sufferings of the tragic destiny, has a nature common to ours and as much sensitive also, the dramatist being one of us, the common fellowman, is not to present the inner recesses of his characters' personality, the parables of which may easily be heard in his or our nature. The artist, says Plato, produces not reality but something less than that; though he creates something lesser than reality, he also creates something more than reality. He gives us his intention according to his standpoint. This kinship does not exist anyhow or the other. The listener to drama, it is held, needs absolutely neither learning nor cultivation, but a pair of eyes and a heart. This also reflects upon the relation that drama has with life.

The function of the dramatist as pointed out by critics is also practicable. To him subject is all important from every stand point. As he stands in close proximity to real life, and endeavours to endow his own imaginary creations with vitality-he must decidedly take part with one or another of leading views of human life, and constrain his audience also to participate in the same feeling. This is the keynote of the dramatist's art. So also the function of drama insists in its being acted and what is missed by the dramatist, is to be compensated by the actor. So in this way drama becomes self-contained, a complete picture of life as it is, rather a mirror to life.

Firstly, a mirror in the sense that it presents a view of life and secondly in a metaphorical sense as something presenting us a realisation of what life actually is. It is in the latter sense that we take the imaginative side of the dramatists' mind and views. So we feel that drama holds a mirror to life in every sense of the word.