

Tragic Quality in Billy Budd, Sailor

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Abstract- A tragedy portrays human torment and problems, generally a alteration in the situation of the hero from cheerfulness or affluence to misfortune, depression, agony, and even bereavement. This change in the conditions may be brought about by some blunder or flaw in the hero himself, or by a mixture of these. A tragedy represents also a quarrel of some kind. The argument may be between the hero and a villain; it may be a conflict between the hero and situations. According to Aristotle, a tragedy provokes in the hearts of the viewers the feelings of disappointment and panic, and brings about a catharsis or purgation of these and kindered sensation.

Index Terms- affluence, agony, bereavement, purgation.

BILLY BUDD SAILOR AS A TRAGIC HERO

Billy Budd is a young hero, good-looking sailor who wins our high regard by his good looks, his absolute plainness of nature, and his utter honesty. Melville himself refers to this sailor as the “hero” of the novel, though not a predictable hero. Billy’s very fine looks, straightforwardness, and integrity prove to be the reason of his humiliation because these admirable intrinsic worth and attributes of his give rise to belief of anger, desire, and hopelessness in a man called Claggart who becomes antagonistic to him and tries to destroy him. But the hero Billy Budd grieves also from a certain verbal failing which presents to his humiliation. Under some unexpected aggravation, or under a little emotional anxiety, Billy would find himself incapable to communicate himself comprehensibly in words. On such occasions he would begin to hesitate or falter. At such moments, then, this lack of ability to speak correctly would prove a grim problem to him. This vocal blemish is specifically the basis why Billy cannot look after himself when he is indicted by Claggart of a serious inculpation to his very face and in the occurrence of Captain Vere. Unable to protect himself in words, he

hits Claggart, giving him a harsh rage which kills that man. Billy is then put on examination for having mortally battered his higher officer, and is sentenced to death. The implementation of Billy fills us with deep disappointment. A hopeful career has been cut off by certain surprising developments. Such is the tragedy of Billy.

THE CAUSE OF THE TRAGEDY OF BILLY

The fate employs no role in the tragedy of Billy. In ancient conventional tragedy, fate occasionally played a significant role in prompting about the tragedy of the hero. In Shakespearean drama also fate plays a considerable role though not a important role, because here the hero himself is mostly to responsibility for the catastrophe which overhauls him. In the novel before us, are not made even cognisant of such as influence as fate. It is true that, after Billy has involuntarily killed Claggart, Captain Vere says to him: “Fate boy, what have you done!” But this statement only shows that Captain Vere here gets the emotion that Billy himself is not to guilt for what has happened, and that it was the deceptiveness of the inculpation brought against him by Claggart which had motivated Billy to such an level that he had reacted by giving Claggart a blow under a hasty inclination.

The real basis of the tragedy here is Claggart. The author has strained the character of this villain in some detail. Claggart is a man by nature immoral. He appears to be almost a personification of wickedness. Evil is instinctive in him. Evil becomes a obsession with him. Billy has done no hurt to him at all. In fact, it is Billy’s very inoffensive and inexperience which fill Claggart with greed and give rise to a feeling of bitterness in him towards Billy. Billy’s outstanding good looks and his complete kindness, unhurt by the slightest malice, reinforce Claggart’s feelings of

jealousy and antipathy. It is in command to give an outlet to his feelings of resentment and antagonism that Claggart contrives a charge against Billy in order to demolish him. If the master-at-arms had been an ordinary officer on plank the ship, he would have been a source of support to Billy instead of flattering the origin of Billy's annihilation. Billy's incapability to protect himself against the incriminate because of his vocal barrier has its share in provoke the tragedy; but Claggart is the man whose immorality mindedness is chiefly accountable for what happens. And then, of course, there is the responsibility of Captain Vere who puts Billy on testing before a court-martial and who then longs the court-martial to announce Billy responsible and to enforce upon him the utmost penalty which the law specifies. It is Captain Vere who is accountable for the disapproval of death against Billy. A less inflexible tyrant might have examined the case of Billy in a different way, and might have shown humanity. In short, the complete tragedy of Billy is man-made. If at all detestation has any hand, it is to be seen in the vocal fault from which Billy suffers. Melville himself facet this verbal deficiency in Billy to mechanism of Satan, "the arch interfere, and the jealous marplot of Eden".

A TRAGEDY WITHOUT A TRAGIC HERO

As a view of critic, it is proven that there is no hero in this tragedy. Claggart is a villain undeniably. But he grieves from a obsession for wickedness; and he is therefore a madman. But, says this critic, Captain Vere too is a madman because he too endures from a mania. If Claggart has the mania of wicked mindedness, Captain Vere suffers from the craze of military obedience and the military signs of behaviour. As for Billy, he is too blameless a man to be remarked as the hero. He is an innocent person who is quickly alleviate by the words which Captain Vere communicates to him during a confidential interview after the sentence alongside Billy has been pronounced. Billy is condemned by "modes, deliberate forms." Captain Vere's performance, in addition to his inner character, is ambiguous, and barely heroic. If, therefore, this novel is to be noticed as a tragedy, it is a tragedy without a tragic hero. And this critic goes on to say that modern tragedy does not essentially involve a tragic hero. This critic ceases his disagreement by saying that this novel is

neither Melville's witness neither of approval nor of objection, but his last allegory of the human situation. Here Melville marks to the forces which can constrain the concealed cascade of love either to anguish or to approval, either to annihilation or to curative confidence. However, we must say that the line of quarrel accepted by this critic does not actually induce us. We fix to our point of analysis that BillyBudd, Sailor is an authentic tragedy and an influential one too.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lall Ramji; "Herman Melville's Billy Budd, Sailor", published by Rama Brothers: New Delhi.