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Prof. K. N. Shelke

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Solitude Leads to Salvation a Critical Study on William Golding's *Free Fall***G. Christopher***Faculty in English, VIT University, Vellore. (T.N.) India***Abstract**

Golding's novels are known for his incisive insight into human nature. He recognizes the evil in man and yearns for man's redemption from it. In *Free Fall* Beatrice was the most beautiful girl to Sammy Mountjoy only till he lusted on her. When he found Taffy more satisfying, he left her without any thoughts of the harm that he might have done. Self-survival is the aim and end of the age, which can be attained only through despicable means. In the concentration camp, Sammy recalls his past freedom and his failure to use it to any good end. Sammy Mountjoy is a sorry specimen of the human predicament but the saving grace of Sammy Mountjoy lies in his belated realization. Golding deals with the inner chaos of man to explain the outer world of social behaviour. In Golding's view, contemporary man lacks vision. Like Samuel Mountjoy, men are frustrated and troubled as long as one does not realize that his evil acts will not succeed. Love, consideration for fellow human beings and his efforts to coexist with them will bring him a sense of fulfillment and lasting peace to the mind.

Key Words: Insight, redemption, despicable, specimen, predicament Christopher Gnanadurai

William Golding, the British novelist is one of the most significant writers of twentieth century concerned with the problem of evil, who wrote imaginative fables of the human condition of the modern time. His novel presents conflicts, doubts concerning man's relation to himself and to his God, chaos and disintegration, loneliness and frustration as assault him and his society. William Golding joined in Royal Navy and had witnessed Second World War. The tragedy of the World War caused Golding, like many other in his generation, to think deeply about the nature of man and the problems of good and evil that figure so prominently to his works. His war time experiences served as the basic plot of most of his writings.

Golding returned home, began to be a teacher after the world war and started to

Write. He published his first novel *Lord of the Flies* in (1954) successfully and it was filmed by Peter Brook in 1963. The other novels, plays and essays of Golding's are *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *The Brass Butterfly* (play) 1958, *Free Fall* (novel) 1959, *The Spire* (novel) 1964, *The Hot Gates* (essays) 1965, *The Pyramid* (novel) 1967, *The Scorpion God* (three short novels) 1971, *Darkness Visible* (novel) 1979, *Rites of Passage* (novel) 1980, *A Moving Target* (essays and autobiographical pieces) 1982, *The Paper Men* (novel) 1984, *An Egyptian Journal* 1985, *Close Quarters* (novel) 1987, *Fire Down Below*(novel) 1989. He received the 'Booker Prize' award for his novel *Rites of Passage* in 1980. Golding retired in 1962 from teaching and lived in Wiltshire listening to Music and the other his recreations were sailing, archaeology and classical Greek. The literary world lost the booker prize winner in June 19, 1993.

After a gap of almost three years, William Golding came out again with the fourth novel, *Free Fall* (1959). This novel is also a parody of Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (The Poems of Youth). Golding describes *Free Fall* as, "the patternlessness of life." Taking a new direction in his literary career, Golding presents a new mode of writing - switching from third person narrative to first person narrative, from exotic, remote and isolated settings as on island, in sea, in pre-history, or on a rock, to the more open, contemporary social world. *Free Fall*, like its immediate predecessor, deals with an individual. Yet the theme is more personal and more individual in which society has a role to do in shaping the life of an individual. Another significant difference relates to Golding's continuing quest for self-knowledge. He offers a new mode of vision - from characters being evil, or avoiding recognizing the truth of their own nature, like Martin, to characters in the search of understanding their own evil, in other words, characters in search of truth. (Kinhead-Weekes and Gregor 1967)

What we notice in this literary period is that *Lord of the Flies*, *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall* share the fact that the Second World War considerably influenced William Golding. More specifically, the war element is present in each novel. Interesting is that Golding is not a war novelist. He made use of war as a background but did not talk about war for the war itself. He did not write about soldiers or battles but war is taken as a point of departure for a revelation of what he believes in the problem of man to learn, "to live fearlessly with the natural chaos of existence, without forcing artificial pattern on it." (quoted in Baker 1965: 55-56). Therefore, it goes without saying that war

had influenced Golding and his writings. Another of Golding's interests and passion that can be seen in his *Free Fall*, the content and tenor of his writing was his time and experience as a school teacher.

A critical analysis of William Golding's *Free Fall*:

Sammy, *Samuel Mount joy* is the protagonist of the William Golding's novel FREE FALL. He is a son of a drunken woman and unknown father. He lives in 'Rotten row'. Basically, the hero is a talented artist, a painter. In the early days of his life, Sammy is innocent and has full freedom. He enjoys his life in spending time in park with free will. He loves his mother very much; she is his world in his childhood.

Sammy served in the World War II as a soldier and was captured by the German camp. He was imprisoned with other soldiers, who were escaped later. To know their plan, Sammy was torture by Dr. Halde and later he was put in cell which was almost a hell to him. While he is held in captivity, he discovers his "own interior identity." (Golding 1959; 190) In the concentration camp, he recalls his past freedom and his failure to use it to any good end. The experience forces him to retrospectively recalls all his 'yesterdays' that have passed in order to figure out why things went wrong. He looks back and forth in his store of memories. He examines his childhood as a fatherless boy in Rotten Row; he searches his chaotic school days and the smacks of innocence, at the rectory, and his amative romance with Beatrice who is jilted alter he has satisfied himself and who has lost her sanity upon hearing his being married to the new girl. All this examination of his life is to find out the knot that led to what

he is now; to find the moment where, “he sees the better path and chooses the worse,” in other words, “where did I lose my freedom?” Although all these attempts to find an answer to this burning question rendered almost the same answer: 'No. Not here,' except the last one 'Here?' The guilt he has committed upon Beatrice keeps haunting him. Thus, he dedicates himself to search for the moment when, why and where he has surrendered his freedom, and lost the power to choose. Sammy Mountjoy speaks:

But then what I am looking for? I am looking for the beginning of Responsibility, the beginning of darkness, the point where I began.
(FF: 47)

He goes on questioning himself in order to identify the particular moment, the particular stage at which he lost his innocence and the fall began.

Truth from Dark

In the prison, Sammy recalled his childhood. He had a very good and joyful life. But he was misled by two of his friends, Johnny Sprang and Phillip Arnold. Johnny misguided him in enter into a forbidden place, airport. Phillip encouraged him to desecrate the altar - to spit on it. Priest condemned him. But the irony is that the same priest adopted Sammy after his mother's death. Sammy experienced a bad incident, priest approaching for homosexual.

After that he recalled his adolescent age where he loved Beatrice, a pretty and chaste girl. He seduced her and after enjoying complete pleasure with Beatrice he left her married Taffy later. He also recalled his school teachers, Miss Pringle and Nick Shales. Sammy were freed from the prison. He wanted to see his love,

Beatrice and his teachers. His life in the prison camp had brought him enlightenment. When he came to meet Beatrice to his surprise he saw her in the asylum. He wanted to help Beatrice for who has been committed to a mental institution. At the end, Sammy admits the truth and repents for his wicked life and seeks for redemption and salvation.

Sammy realization came when he suffered in the hands of Dr. Halde. Basically, Sammy was good, religious and innocent boy but he joined the company of evil because of his friends in boyhood then by priest approach to him in bad thought, his unknown parenthood paved way to commit adultery which tormented him when he was in prison. This led to self - realization and redemption. Now, the world around him becomes beautiful again and his own self becomes ugly. Sammy becomes the mouthpiece of every human being.

The crux of the novel doesn't depend on the revelation but the response. But the peculiar chronology of Free Fall is not willfully obscure, but logical young Sammy faces his spiritual trials. He prefers one of the philosophies. He chooses Nick as a good being and rejects Rowena as a bad one. Sammy converts Nick's rationalism into an egotistic ethic where good and evil become relative, the only absolutes being one's own desires and the eleventh commandment. When you want to get something that you desired for, you should be ready to sacrifice it. Sammy determines the course of his life and loses his freedom. It is his free fall. At last Sammy finds himself rather like T.S. Eliot in the Four Quartets specially 'Burnt Norton' looking for an answer to the problem of freedom, not in the loss of

freedom but in the moment when he found himself detached enough from time and process to look at them from outside.

Sammy reveals and represents human pride and egoism through willingness to sacrifice everything to achieve his aim but fail to concern for others. Like Faust, Sammy loses his freedom of his human pride. Finally, when Sammy had discovered his sin, the reader suddenly learns that Beatrice has been in a mental institution ever since Sammy deserted her seven years earlier.

Amid the terror and the blackness of the cell, Dr. Halde, his interrogator, discloses the mediocrity of his character, the state of consciousness he has grown up with:

You do not believe in anything enough to suffer for it or be glad (...) you wait in a dusty waiting room on no particular line for no particular train. And between the poles of belief in material things and the belief in a world made and supported by a supreme being, you oscillate jerkily from day to day, From hour to hour. (FF: 144).

It is only when he recalls the words of his headmaster on graduation day that he finds some consolation to the dilemma he is in

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and is able to trace his life back to the exact point in which he is no longer free to choose, the point at which he has imposed a 'pattern' on *his* life. Sammy concludes, in his quest for a pattern, there are two worlds, and both are real. Yet, "There is no bridge," resulting in the free fall of Sammy Mountjoy.

Conclusion:

One could learn the life of Sammy that evil and unhappiness are inevitable that it is man's fate both to inflict and to endure suffering. There was a kind of influence of pessimism that of Thomas Hardy and George Guessing. But generally people compare Golding's views to George Eliot's meliorism. Gloomy mood predominates Golding's century. But we could find that Sammy realized all his mistakes at the last and paved a little path to mend everything to reach the salvation. It is true that his solitude enforced him to realize his mistakes and took him to salvation. So there was a little hope in Sammy's character that it was possible. Dim is the solitary light that shines over the bleak landscape of the modern world yet it is enough to save man from utter hopelessness and to impart meaning and purpose to artistic creation.

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