

## **Study of John Galsworthy's *Justice* as a Realistic Exposure of the English Society**

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### **Abstract**

John Galsworthy was an English playwright of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alike G. B. Shaw he used drama as a vehicle for assigning communal criticism in each of his plays, he uncovered some social illness or other. John Galsworthy's conception of drama is grounded on realism and general sense of morals. He supposed that drama is a noteworthy art form and capable of inspiring the attention and conveying consciousness of honorable ideologies in human life. Being a law graduate he was conscious of the severe restriction of a legalistic approach to men and matters. Galsworthy also becomes victim of rigid law and rigid society, since he was not married to his lover, Ada. In *Justice* he exposes all evil of the society like rigid divorce law, rigidity of society, solitary confinement and injustice done to prisoner. Galsworthy presented it by using naturalistic technique. Therefore, basic aim of this paper is to study the ills of English society which caused the demise of the main character Falder.

**Keywords:** John Galsworthy, *Justice*, Realistic, English society, naturalistic technique, rigid law

### **Introduction**

John Galsworthy is the best eminent problem writer and novelist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like Bernard Shaw and his forerunner Ibsen, Galsworthy also presented some boiling problems or other in all his plays. In his novel he deals with particular social or moral problems of his period so as to make societies consider wisely about such problems. It is generally somewhat catastrophic in nature in that it logically deals with excruciating human problems. It is a type of writing that, by implication, asks a certain question and either supply an answer or leave it to people to find. One of his best-known plays *The Silver Box* deals with the inequality of justice. His other novels like *Strife*, *The Skin Game*, *Loyalties*, and *Escape* also deal with human problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in England. His dramas frequently find their themes in this stratum of society, but also often deal with the economically and socially troubled and with questions of social justice. Thus, there is a social problem at the core of all Galsworthy's plays.

His role as reformer and philanthropist did not let him stay in the magic world of fancy and imagination (Hosain, 2015). Galsworthy is recognized chiefly for his dramas in which he adopted the ‘naturalistic technique’. Explaining his preference for naturalistic art he said: “Naturalistic art is like a steady lamp, held from time to time, in whose light things will be seen for a space clearly and in due proportion, freed from the mist of prejudice and partisanship” (Shanmugakani, 1992).

In Galsworthy’s *Justice* the central character Falder is a weak-willed and jumpy individual with a noble purpose of providing relief to a distress woman. In so doing he commits an offense (forges a cheque) which leads him to prison and to demise. Thus, he becomes a pitiful figure rather than a tragic one. Legal system functions in such a callous way that it makes contempt of the notion of ‘justice’ and abolishes the individual completely. The play finds its end in the demise of Falder who is more sinned against than sinning.

### **Rigid Laws**

John Galsworthy used name *justice* ironically, for the play is not about how Justice conquers but how injustice is meted out to the frail and the downtrodden. According to Galsworthy, the law works blindly and impersonally, grueling frequently blameless persons. We have Fromes appalling analogy of justice as a monstrous machine which roll down without any driver to check its speed or direction according to exigencies, with innocent people getting crushed under its wheels (Shanmugakani, 1992).

The real culprit in the play is Ruth’s husband, Honeywill a drunken man who beats and harasses Ruth to the degree of trying to strangle her. So, Folder forged the cheque to rescue Ruth from the brutal clutches of her husband. The actual offender is Honeywill who is core reason of entire tragedy, but law permits him to go scot-free.

Like Galsworthy, Ruth also agonized because of the unbending divorce laws. Honeywill was a brute he tried to strangle Ruth in his drunken state. However, according to standing rigid divorce law Ruth was unable to divorce him for being drunken alone. She has waited for Honeywill to contract some more evil. If the divorce law had been simpler, Ruth would have dissolved her disappointing marriage and been united with Falder who would not have been forced to forge (swindle) in order to elope with Ruth to South America. Thus, rigid laws performed the roll of real villain which is root cause of the entire tragedy. In *Justice*, Cokeson and Frome are Galsworthy’s perfect mouthpieces in the sense that they sympathize and see things with a humanistic lens. John Galsworthy speaks through Frome thus:

FROME. Once this cheque was altered and presented, the work of four minutes—four mad minutes—the rest has been silence. But in those four minutes the boy before you has slipped

through a door, hardly opened, into that great cage which never again quite lets a man go—the cage of the law. (Act II, 153).

This very sentence reflects the rigidity of law of then period.

### **Bad Condition of Women**

In *Justice*, through the treatment given by a husband (Honeywill) to his wife (Ruth) one can easily understand the condition of women at that time. A woman was considered and treated as an inferior thing in a male controlling culture. She was treated as a slave; On the contrary the men had every type of liberty. They had a license to drink and beat their wives and treat them wildly. They consider their wives as beasts. They could never think of their families, wives and the children. Most of the times they became the cause of the demolition of their families. A woman was always considered as the weaker segment in the society so she bears the mistreatment and the cold-hearted treatment given by the men during their entire life, but they never oppose their husbands.

Through the way Ruth lived her life when she left her husband and Falder's confinement we can conclude that she was very careful about her children. She made sacrifice for her family; she supported herself for brief period by making shirts. As this income was inadequate, she was finally forced to become her employer's mistress. So, in this way for the sake of family she made sacrifice.

### **Rigid Society**

Cokeson, James How, Walter How, and Sweedle are characters who stick to their firm and professional principles. They are on the side of the law. Some characters like How James reflect themselves as defenders of law and order. Up to some extent he was correct that being a head of the firm he had to maintain some discipline. James neglected the circumstances in which Falder falsified the cheque, committed the blunder. He did not pay attention to the intention of Falder why he was doing so and also Falder did not have any criminal history or criminal background. Instead he considered Falder as habitual swindler and philanderer. And strongly affirmed that if the situations resulting in a crime were taken into attention, no criminal could be punished. James supposed that the occurrence of offense can be dropped by merely punishing criminals severely.

### **Solitary Confinement**

From Act 3 we come to know the difficulty of jailbirds. When governor visit the prisoner and try to apprehend the problems of prisoner. He hears all the problems of prisoners. He comes to know that prisoners are trying to escape. Solitary confinement is an intolerable torture to them. Prisoners were beating doors unvaryingly, herby seeing an outlet for their bored

and depression. The star class Falder also joins in this savage act. Galsworthy feels that it is an injustice to confine prisoners who were mental patients in solitary cells. Solitary confinement only worsens their sickness. Frome who is mouth piece of Galsworthy aptly remarked about prisoner and prison as follows:

Frome- Gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight which sees them as they are, patients, and not criminals. (Act II, 153).

According to Galsworthy the main defect in system is that prisoners are treated inhumanly. Prisoners suffering from mental derangement need the steadying influence of their friends. Prisoner administrators were not allowing visitors to the prisoners. This was rigid a rule. The result was their pent-up feeling was not having any outlet. The prisoners became very restless. And they began to indulge in subversive activity such as sawing off window, bars and trying to escape (Shanmugakani,1992). This entire disaster could have been avoided if the rules had been hassle-free and the prisoners permitted to socialize with one another and allowed to visit their kin. Additional injustice done to prisoners is that no actual exertions are taken to reorient these convicts after they are set free, instead they are free to report personally to the police station-a treatment most humiliating to self-respecting, delicate people like Falder.

## **Conclusion**

Galsworthy in his play *Justice* does all to attract the consideration of his spectators to the evil of solitary confinement and its shattering effect on the prisoners. Galsworthy pointed out that the very measure taken by administrators to boost justice turn out to be mechanisms of injustice. In justice we can see how the law functions sightlessly and detachedly, harsh to mostly innocent people. Falder is not innocent. He had committed the offence, but rigid society and rigid law neglected the circumstances and good intention behind it, so he was penalized three years laborious custody, and this made him nervous wreck. Discharged from prison, he finds it problematic to get an employment. He falsifies a letter of introduction and is detained once more. Due to this, he comes to know that he can never become an ordinary law obliging citizen. So, he committed suicide. The need for prison reform, need for reform in rigidity of society and need for relaxing divorce laws are also stressed in this play. Ruth agonized because she was not able to divorce her cruel husband and live with Falder whom she loved.

*Justice* created great awareness, particularly in Parliamentary and official circles. Winston Churchill, the new Home Secretary, and Ruggles-Brise, head of the Prison Commission both saw the play, first with sympathy, the second with a sinking sensation. Reinforcing previous efforts, the net result was that solitary confinement was reduced to three months for recidivists, and to one month for intermediates and star class. (Muralidharan, 2017; Varshney, 2013). The play deals with all kinds of injustice but is called Justice.

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