

BRITISH NOVELISTS AND LEO TOLSTOY

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LEO TOLSTOY

K.K. SHARMA

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A creative artist of the calibre and stature of Leo Tolstoy merits discussion time and again. Indeed, the writer of the greatest novel of the world, *War and Peace*, would always inspire people interested in fiction to scrutinise his mind and art. Small wonder great British novelists of his time and of the succeeding generations were irresistibly attracted towards the master fictionist, and made numerous statements about his art and ideas in their expository writings. This has impelled me to study closely the great Russian and some of the major English novelists' varied critical responses to him. The volume begins with a compact introduction to the making of Tolstoy the writer. The next six chapters analyse six great English novelist-critics' variegated critical observations on, and assessments of, Tolstoy's inimitable creative genius and his different forms of writings. The British novelists considered in this context are: Henry James, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary. It is hoped that the book will be interesting and stimulating to the academics in India and abroad.

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**DEDICATED**

**TO**

**THE SACRED, HAUNTING MEMORY OF**

**MY PARENTS**

**LATE PT. CHHEDA LAL SHARMA  
LATE SMT. CHANDRAVATI SHARMA**

**&**

**MY ELDER BROTHER**

**LATE T.R. SHARMA, PH. D., D. LIT.  
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## Preface

A creative artist of the calibre and stature of Leo Tolstoy merits discussion time and again. Indeed, the writer of the greatest novel of the world till today, *War and Peace*, would always inspire people interested in fiction to scrutinise his mind and art. Small wonder great British fiction writers of his time and of the succeeding generations were irresistibly attracted towards the master fictionist, and made numerous statements about his art and ideas in their non-fictional, expository writings. This has impelled me to study closely the great Russian and some of the major English novelists' varied critical responses to him. The result is the present book which consists of eight chapters. The volume begins with a useful, compact introduction to the making of Tolstoy the writer — of course, necessary for the correct understanding of his socio-religious thoughts related to the well-being of humanity, and of his extraordinary fictional art. The next six chapters are an attempt to analyse dispassionately six great English novelist-critics' variegated critical observations on, and assessments of, Tolstoy's inimitable creative genius and his different forms of writings. The British novelists considered in this context are: Henry James, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary. Inevitably, it is hoped that the book will arrest the attention of a large reading public in India and abroad, and will be interesting and stimulating to the academics as well.

May 2011

**K.K. Sharma**

## AN INTRODUCTION TO LEO TOLSTOY

A writer of transcendent genius, Tolstoy has always been, and will ever be, acclaimed the world over. He enjoyed immense popularity in his life time and exerted tremendous impact on his contemporaries in Russia as well as abroad. Just one instance is enough to evidence it: on his eightieth birthday, i.e. 28 August 1908, and the week following it there was almost a flood of letters and telegrams of congratulations from the different parts of the world. The records reveal that on his eightieth birthday six hundred telegrams and one hundred letters reached him, and in a week the number went up to several hundred letters and two thousand telegrams. What baffles us is that he was greeted at least by fifty thousand people including such literary luminaries as Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, G.B. Shaw, George Meredith, Rudyard Kipling, Gerhard Hauptmann and Edward Carpenter, to mention a few only. Tolstoy was overwhelmed by such a heap of admiration and love for him and his writings, which is evident in the following extract from his letter of 5 October 1908 expressing his gratitude and joy at this:

...what happened was something I never expected, namely that from the end of August up to the present day I have received and continue to receive such flattering greetings from so many different quarters that I feel the need to express my sincere gratitude to all those people and institutions which have behaved in such a kind and friendly way towards me.

I thank all universities, town councils, zemstvo councils, various academic institutions, societies, unions, groups of people, clubs, associations, and editorial boards of news papers and journals which have sent me addresses and greetings. I also thank all my friends and acquaintances, both in Russia and abroad, who remembered me on this day. I thank

all the people who are unknown to me of every kind of social status including prisoners and forced labourers who greeted me with equal friendliness. I thank the young men and women and children who sent me their congratulations. I also thank the clergy — although very few in number, their greetings were all the more dear to me — for their good wishes. I also thank those people who, as well as their congratulations, sent me touching presents.

I warmly thank all those who sent their greetings, and especially those of them (the majority of those who wrote to me) who, quite unexpectedly and to my great joy, expressed in their letters to me their complete agreement, not with me, but with the eternal truths which I have tried to express as best I could in my writings. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 682-83)

In order to comprehend and judge correctly Tolstoy's eminent contemporary British fictionists' response to him, it is essential to discuss briefly the variegated formative influences on his mind and art with special reference to his major fictional works. It is a common parlance of literary criticism that a writer's art and ideas are shaped by varied factors such as family background, education, socio-political milieu, personal and impersonal relationships, deeply felt experiences, personal predilections and attitude, the literary world he or she lives in, etc. This is true of Leo Tolstoy also. His childhood world, the political and socio-cultural conditions of his time, the persons with whom he lived, his experiences as a married man, his premarital relationships, the works he studied, etc. — all these had contributed to the making of the artist in him.

Leo Tolstoy, the fourth of the five children of Count Nikolay and Countess Marya Tolstoy, was born on 28 August 1828 in Yasnaya Polyana at a distance of 130 miles from Moscow. Unfortunately, he lost his mother in infancy at the age of two and his father at the age of nine in 1837 shortly after the family had shifted to Moscow. It is said that he loved his mother more than his father. But he remembered his father fondly and tells us that the latter built

up a good library at home and that he was innately kind to everyone including servants. He was enchanted by his "father's kindness" even towards his footman Tikhon ( Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* 27) . His father's sister named Alexandra Ilyinichna Osten-Saken became the legal guardian of Leo Tolstoy's brothers and sisters after their grandmother's death in 1838, but she also died in 1841. Tolstoy did not like his grandmother as she had little intellect and was envious of his mother. As regards his aunt, she had a very tragic married life owing to her husband's insanity and at last was forced by circumstances to live with her parents to lead a life of austerity and religious piety. After her death, Pelageya Ilyinichna Yushkova, another sister of Leo's father, became the legal guardian, and hence the Tolstoy family lived with her in Kazan for about six years. Owing to these happenings in the family, even as an adolescent Tolstoy was often possessed with abstract questions and their answers, particularly related to death. He would frequently feel as if death were to overpower him very soon. Another question would also often disturb him: why should one think of the future ignoring the possibility of getting happiness in the present? Besides, he would usually think of eternity after death. He believed in pre-existence, and the loss of remembrance of earlier lives. At that time he was a follower of Russian orthodoxy and offered morning and night prayers regularly, but he did not sincerely believe in rituals and orthodoxy.

At the age of sixteen Leo Tolstoy joined the University of Kazan with the intention of studying oriental languages, and after one year he shifted to the Faculty of Law, but his life of dissipation and venereal diseases forced him to leave the university in three years only without obtaining any degree to return to his native place Yasnaya Polyana to look after his inherited estate and his serfs. Unfortunately, at the age of nineteen, he suffered from serious ailment and had to be admitted to a hospital. But luckily this caused a turning point in his life. Habitual of having servants to look after him, he, during the illness, had to live without any servant. It was from this time onwards that he always maintained a diary, and the following extract from his *Diary* dated 17 March 1847 reveals his strange mental state of those days:

I am completely alone here, no one bothers me, I have no servants, no one helps me — therefore, nothing extraneous can affect my reason and my memory, and my mental activity must definitely develop. The most important thing is that I have come to see very clearly that loose living, which the majority of society people put down to youth is nothing but a consequence of an early depravity of soul.

At that time even before the end of his teenage, he could acquire full trust in self-perfection. In fact, he decided to seek happiness by trying to attain physical, moral and intellectual perfection. No wonder he laid down for himself certain “rules of life”:

- ( a ) To get up at five, go to bed at nine or ten, and perhaps sleep two hours during the day.
- ( b ) To eat moderately, nothing sweet.
- ( c ) To walk for an hour.
- ( d ) To fulfil all my written injunctions.
- ( e ) To ( have ) one woman only, and then only once or twice a month.
- ( f ) To do everything possible for myself. ( Quoted in

E.J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* 73)

As a matter of fact, he seemed to direct his life towards higher aims, viz. to seek a meaningful, lofty purpose in life so as to quieten his spiritual unrest. The following entry in his *Diary* of those days clearly evinces his deep interest in the meaning of life and his spiritual well being:

I would be the unhappiest of mortals if I could not find a purpose in life — a common and a useful purpose, useful because my immortal soul by virtue of its development will pass naturally into an existence superior and more suitable to it. ( 74)

However, Tolstoy was almost a derelict, a person without a definite object in life, and hence only in one year he left that place for Moscow and indulged in debauchery there. In about one year only he moved to Petersburg, and after a short period in the Faculty of Law of the University he again went back to his native place due to gambling debts and started a school for the peasant children.

There he lived for about two years and took keen interest in cards, gymnastics and music. Importantly, he wrote in 1851 *A History of Yesterday* which he did not publish, translated much of Sterne's popular novel, *Sentimental Journey*, and also started writing his first autobiographical creative work, *Childhood*. The same year he went to the Caucasus with his eldest brother, Nikolay, who was already in the army, and soon he became a volunteer in an expedition against a local village. He developed interest in army service, and intended to become a cadet in it. During this period he was quite intimate with his second eldest brother, Sergey, whom he wrote many letters.

Tolstoy took up military career for about three years by joining the regular army as a cadet in the early months of 1852, and the military experience formed the basis of his early creative writing. For about two years he was in an artillery brigade posted at the Cossack village in the North Caucasus. As Russia had annexed Georgia to its territory in 1801, the Russians were often busy in suppressing the defiant mountain tribes between Georgia and the Cossack forts defending the country's southern borders. The Chechen tribe of the region often posed serious threat to the Russians. Naturally, Tolstoy had to participate in several expeditions against the Chechens, and once he escaped death by an enemy grenade and once narrowly escaped from being the prisoner of the enemy. He was commissioned in 1854 and was in active service to curb the hostile Turkey. Also, for quite some time he served only as a staff officer, having nothing to do with actual fighting. In November 1854 he went to Sevastopol and participated in the Crimean war the next year. After the fall of Sevastopol at the hands of the allied forces of England and France, he resigned from the army service. For his extraordinary courage and bravery at the battle of the Chornaya river in August 1855, he got promotion and became lieutenant. Since he was not on full-time army service in the Caucasus, the Danube and the Crimea, during this period he could have leisure, travelling, reading, writing, sex, etc., which, coupled with his military experiences, supplied him suitable material for his initial writing. The result was the publication, in quick succession, of *Childhood* ( 1852 ) , “The Raid” ( 1853 ) , *Boyhood* ( 1854 ) ,

“Sevastopol in December”, “Sevastopol in May” and “The Wood-felling” ( 1855) , and “Sevastopol in August”( 1856) . Thus, though he could not become a general in the army, yet could become a man of letters.

True, while in the Caucasus, Tolstoy was almost absorbed in reading and writing. He perused the works of authors like Balzac, Stendhal, Beranger, Sterne, Dickens, Thackeray, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ostrovsky, Griboyedev, Pisemsky and others. Undoubtedly, Dickens was his favourite fictionist whom he eulogized thus: “I think Charles Dickens is the greatest novel writer of the 19th century and that his works, impressed with true Christian spirit, have done and will continue to do a great deal of good for mankind” ( Quoted in N.N. Gusev, *Life of L.N. Tolstoy* 90) . Also, he read the historical works by Thiers, Hume. Karamzin and Michaud with such a keen interest as he noted down in his *Diary* on September 22, 1852 that his aim in the near future would be to write an authentic history of Europe of his time: “Must compose a true and just history of Europe of the present century. There I have an aim for my whole life. Few epochs in history are so instructive as this one or so little debated....” Then, a close reading of Rousseau's *Contrast Social* and Plato's *Politics* made him jot down in his *Diary* on August 3, 1852: “Will devote the rest of my life to drawing up a plan for an aristocratic selective union with a monarchical administration on the basis of existing elections. Here I have an aim for a virtuous life. I thank thee, O Lord. Grant me strength.” His immersion in reading and writing led him to ponder over the purpose of life and the struggle between good and evil. Hence the entry made in his *Diary* on June 11-12, 1851:

Rather I was yearning for something lofty and good. What that something was I cannot explain, although I clearly recognized what I desired. I wanted to become fused with the All-Embracing Substance. I besought it to pardon my sins.... I could not separate the feeling of faith, hope and love from my general feeling. No, the feeling I experienced last night was love for God, uniting in itself all that is good and renouncing what is bad.

One thing: even before the years spent in the Caucasus, Tolstoy at the age of eighteen only read copiously and was particularly influenced by six writers — viz. Pushkin, Sterne, Rousseau, D.N. Begichev, Grigorovich and Lermontov — who considerably shaped his literary intentions and creations. He was enamoured of Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* so much so that he read and re-read it and could not sleep one whole night. A thinking and sensitive young man as he was, he had an impressionable mind, with the result he learnt from these writers a lot about good and evil, human relations and feelings, etc. Speaking of the indelible influences of the first three of these writers on him, Victor Shklovsky states:

... Sterne had taught him to unravel the threads of good and evil which are so tightly interwoven in life.

Rousseau and Sterne taught him to treasure human feeling. But Sterne played with human feeling, he played with his description of it, deceived the reader, coquettishly displayed his superiority over the reader, and slowed up the action artificially, fastening attention on his description of feeling. He did reach people to understand feeling, but at the same time he taught them a disdain for action.

In Pushkin, there are serious human relations behind the feelings of Evgeny Onegin, Tatiana, and Lensky. ( *Lev Tolstoy* 83-4)

The night Tolstoy spent in perusing Pushkin's above-mentioned book, he, as his learned biographer Shkolvsky points out, could have a clear idea of the aim of literature as a means to teach and to explore “the soul in order to remake it” ( 84) . Almost at that very time, he chanced to read D.N. Begichev's popular but mediocre book, *The Holmsky Family*, which taught him how “it was possible to write a realistic Russian novel” ( 85) . Besides, he was fascinated by Grigorovich's *Anton Goremyka* because of its amazing portrayal of the life of a ruined peasant, demonstrating how the Russian peasant in full stature “can and must be described without sneering at him and not for the sake of animating the landscape” ( 85) . Then, he learnt from Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* “the technique of boldly



bringing an accurate geographical description — not a romantic landscape — into a novel, and also an ordinary person to compare with the romantic hero” ( 85) .

Persistently in search of some higher purpose in life, Tolstoy, before leaving Sevastopol, could discover his aim in life as is evident from the small entry of July 25, 1855 in his *Diary*: “Welfare and the ideal of virtue.” About four months before this entry, he made a very significant jotting in his *Diary* on March 4, 1855 regarding his intention of propounding a religious belief for the benefit of humanity — a practical religion free from dogma and rituals enabling man to seek bliss on the earth and not in the unknown future. He wrote:

This is the idea — the founding of a new religion corresponding to the development of mankind: the religion of Christ, but purged of all dogma and mysteriousness, a practical religion, not promising future bliss but realizing bliss on earth. I understand that to bring this idea to fulfilment the conscientious labour of generations towards this end will be necessary. One generation will bequeath the idea to the next, and some day fanaticism or reason will achieve it. Consciously to contribute to the union of man and religion is the basic idea which I hope will improve me.

The period between 1856 to 1862 was quite crucial to Tolstoy as he wanted to give up the irregular active life with no botheration for a living in favour of a regular life with a definite occupation. After resigning from the army in 1856, he spent most of his time in Moscow taking keen interest in the literary world. As a result, he published five new works in 1856 — *Sevastopol in August*, *Meeting a Moscow Acquaintance in the Detachment*, *A Landowner's Morning*, *Two Hussars* and *The Snowstorm*. While the year was very rewarding and fruitful so far as literary creativity was concerned, it affected and shook his personal life on account of the death of his younger brother Dmitry and his infatuation for Valeriya Arsenyeva. Strangely enough, his attraction for Valeriya came to an end in one year only, but that brief love affair crystallised his concept of marriage and gave birth to an interesting story, “Family Happiness”, which was

published a couple of years later in 1859.

1857 is significant in Tolstoy's life, for it was in this year that he for the first time chanced to visit Western Europe — France, Germany and Switzerland. During his stay of six months in these countries, he attempted to write several stories of which only two, i.e. “Lucerne” and “Albert”, were published in 1857 and 1858 respectively, but they did not make any mark. On his return to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy devoted himself to farming and the progress of his estate. In 1858 he assisted in forming the Moscow Musical Society. The next year he founded his school for peasant children due to his keen interest in education. This kept him awfully busy for the next three to four years. The result was that he did not produce any work of fiction in those years. But he brought out an educational journal titled *Yasnaya Polyana*, twelve issues of which appeared in 1862-63 which contained his writings as well as those of the teachers and students of his educational institution. His deep interest in educational theory and practice impelled him to undertake a visit to Western European countries like Germany, France and Italy, with the result he gained the knowledge of modern educational methods. Also, he visited England for the first and the last time in 1861 and happened to hear Charles Dickens on education and meet a few important persons in London. Unfortunately, in his absence a police raid was carried out in his estate to catch the revolutionaries among the teachers and students of his school, and this infuriated him so much so that he lodged a protest to Alexander II.

During this period, Tolstoy was approached by both right and left-wing journals. He also came in close contact with the votaries of ‘art for art's sake’, but soon left them. Throughout these years he had an uncomfortable relationship with Turgenev and also had a fierce quarrel with him in 1861 leading him to challenge the old friend to a duel. His liking for, and association with, the right-wing people of Russia and the Slavophiles continued all these years. Personally, the years between 1856 to 1861 were quite shocking to Tolstoy because he had to confront the deaths of two of his three brothers and the divorce of his only sister. Then, he had the experience of a number of casual, fruitless love affairs with women of his own

class, of intimacy with prostitutes, and of an affair with a married serf from whom he begot a son. The next year, i.e. 1862, he fell in love with Sofya Behrs, the daughter of an old close acquaintance, a Moscow physician. Soon they were engaged and finally married on 23 September 1862 in Moscow. One positive result of the marriage was that he resumed his literary activities after a gap of three years. In 1863 he published the long story, *The Cossacks*, after revising it thoroughly and also the peasant tale, "Polikushka". It was in the autumn of the same year that he started writing his *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*. He became father of the first of his thirteen children and led, for the first time, a regular, patterned life for the next several years.

The period of six years from 1863 onwards in Tolstoy's life was devoted to the writing and publication of *War and Peace*, involving ceaseless, indefatigable creative labour. Undoubtedly, he was at the height of literary creativity. This was the period when writing literature replaced his earlier useful activities of teaching and farming. In order to impart veracity and authenticity to his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, he visited the battle site at Borodino in September 1867 and went to the Rumyantsev Library in Moscow several times to collect relevant material for the novel. However, in addition to his incessant, conscientious literary activity, he took keen interest in bee-keeping, pig-farming, horse-breeding and agriculture, and also tried his hand at sculpture by making a bust of his wife in 1866. During these momentous years, he had intimate friendship with Fet, Ivan Aksakov, Prince D. Obolensky and Prince S.S. Urusov, who, as R.F. Christian rightly points out, "along with the historian M.P. Pogodin, may have contributed to the passages in *War and Peace* which concern the philosophy of history" (*Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.I 175). Unfortunately, during this period Tolstoy had to defend himself before a military court, and this event contributed a lot to his increasing hostility and aversion to the military and judicial set up of the state which certainly found a climactic expression in his later fictional work, *Resurrection*. In the last two months of 1864 Tolstoy worked at the Chertkov Library, the head of which, Pyotr Ivanovich Bartenev, an eminent historian of the time, provided Tolstoy with a

lot of necessary material for *War and Peace*, and also read the page proofs of it. Princess Louisa Ivanovna Volkonskaya, the wife of a cousin of Tolstoy deserves a mention here because Liza Bolkonsky in *War and Peace* is largely based on her and she is also the heroine of Tolstoy's notable work, *A History of Yesterday*. While speaking of *War and Peace*, we cannot ignore Mikhail Sergeyevich Bashilov, an artist and sculpture of repute, since he prepared twenty-one drawings for the first two parts of the first volume of this great novel. In connection with the philosophy of history as delineated in *War and Peace*, Tolstoy often discussed and consulted the renowned writer, Yury Fyodorovich Samarin.

After the completion and publication of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy plunged himself into extensive reading and teaching children and writing for them. He earnestly and enthusiastically studied Greek literature, especially Homer and Herodotus, Moliere the French writer, the Russian classics, and the writings of Kant, Pascal and Schopenhauer. Though tired of fiction writing, he, however, resumed working on *The Decembrists* and also began to write a historical novel centred around Peter the Great. The British fictionists like George Eliot, Mrs. Ward and Trollope caught his attention. Despite all these interests and engagements, in early 1870s he mainly concentrated on his *Primer* for the peasant children. After finishing it, in 1873 he started writing another great fictional work, *Anna Karenina*, which was finally completed and published in 1877. The famine of 1873 touched him deeply and he not only wrote about it in papers, but also created a Famine Relief Fund. Since he had developed his own educational theories, he lectured and wrote on them. After the completion of *Anna Karenina*, he was deeply immersed in religious thoughts and questions, with the result in 1879 he visited several monasteries, and had long discussions with monks and laymen on religious matters. Small wonder he wrote several articles on religion, and also began to write his well-known work, *A Confession*. But unfortunately towards the close of the decade beginning with 1870, his married life had developed cracks, which became threatening in the succeeding decade.

Completed in 1882, though not published the same year due

to wide Russian opposition to it, *A Confession* is an authentic record of Tolstoy's spiritual struggle which he underwent for about thirty years and which exerted tremendous influence on his art. Unfortunately, for a few years from 1880 onwards he did not write any fictional work, but wrote on theology and religion, *A Criticism of Dogmatic Theology* and *A Translation and Harmony of the Four Gospels*, which could be published abroad only. While participating in a three-day Moscow census in 1882, he, for the first time, came in close contact with the Moscow slums. As a result, he brought out an article "On the Moscow Census" and a treatise entitled *What Then Must We Do?* comprising his experiences of urban poverty and squalor. Luckily, this phase of creative infertility passed away before 1883 and thus came out a part of *The Decembrists* in 1884, a few very good stories including "Where Love Is, God Is" in 1885, and the poignant fictional piece, *The Death of Ivan Ilich*.

An important happening occurred in 1882: Tolstoy's wife decided to live in Moscow for the sake of her children's education. And this gave Tolstoy the opportunity of studying Hebrew and also enabled him to come in contact with Vladimir Chertkov who became very important for him throughout his life and with him he launched the publishing house named *The Intermediary* to publish ethical literature for the edification of people. His dedication to morality was reflected in his renunciation of alcohol, bloody sports, non-vegetarian food, smoking, luxurious and sensual life, etc. Unluckily, all this precipitated the deterioration of his relationship with his wife and this prompted his first abortive attempt to disappear from his home in 1884. In a lengthy letter to his wife dated 15-18 December 1885, he enumerated the reasons for the fast deteriorating relationship and estrangement between them. The concluding part of this long letter is worth citing here as it brings out his theory and practice of the inseparability of the artist's work from his life:

But all my works, which have been nothing more or less than my life, have been, and are of so little interest to you that when you come across them you read them out of curiosity, like works of literature; while the children are not even interested in reading them at all. You

think that I am one thing and my writing is another. But my writing is the whole of me. In life I have not been able to express my views fully; in life I make concessions to the necessity of living together in the family. I live, and in my soul I deny that life; but this life which is not mine you consider to be my life, while my life which is expressed in my writings you consider to be words which have no reality. All our disagreement has been caused by the fateful mistake 8 years ago whereby you regarded the revolution which had taken place in me — the revolution which brought me from a region of dreams and shadows to real life — as something unnatural, fortuitous, temporary, fantastic, one-sided, which there was no need to study and understand, but which you need to struggle against with all your might. For 8 years you struggled, and the result of this struggle is that I suffer more than ever, but not only do I not give up the views I have adopted, but I keep on going in the same direction and gasp for breath in the struggle, and cause you to suffer too through my own suffering.

.....

You attribute what has happened to everything except this one thing, that you are the unwitting, unintentional cause of my sufferings.

People are out driving and they pass a suffering, dying creature lying on the ground covered in blood. They feel sorry and want to help, but they don't want to stop. Why not try and stop?

.....

A struggle to the death is going on between us. Either God's works, or not God's works. And since God is within you.... ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 399)

The terrible famine of 1891-1892 shook European Russia, and

it so deeply moved Tolstoy that during those years he gave himself completely to the task of helping the suffering people of Tula and Ryazan by organising all kinds of relief programmes. A positive effect of this was the improvement in his relations with his wife, who was wholeheartedly with him in those difficult times of human miseries, but this phase was just a temporary one and lasted soon. The situation worsened when in 1891 he, much to the annoyance of his wife Sofya, renounced, under the influence of Chertkov, the copyright of his works published after 1881. The same year he once for all gave up tobacco, meat, liquor, etc. However, during this period he brought out the controversial novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which was initially banned by the censors, his new play titled *The Fruits of Enlightenment* was produced at the Maly Theatre in Moscow in 1892, the following year saw the publication of his book against war and patriotism under the title *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, and then came out three articles — “Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?”, “The First Step” and “Christianity and Patriotism” — and his impressive preface to Maupassant's stories.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, even when he was about 70 years of age and was much upset due to his jealousy of his wife's Platonic relationship with the composer Taneyev, his sons' indifferent attitude towards him, his daughters' interest in getting married, and his increasingly poor health, Tolstoy brought out three outstanding publications, namely, the short fictional work “Master and Man”, the much censured novel *Resurrection* and the exciting and unconventional critical piece *What Is Art?* In fact, for more than a decade he studied with utmost seriousness and sincerity quite a large number of books on philosophy and varied forms of art — painting, sculpture, music, etc. Consequently, he propounded a theory of art strikingly different from his contemporary European and Russian aesthetics. Thus, defining art in his famous treatise *What Is Art?* he wrote:

Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the aesthetic physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the

expression of man's emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress towards well-being of individuals and of humanity. ( 231)

Unfortunately, Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church on account of his heretical ideas, but he did not succumb to the pressure and retaliated with “A Reply to Holy Synod's Edict.” However, he fell ill seriously and had to be moved to the Black Sea coast for regaining health, but his ill-health did not stop him from writing a significant essay “What Is Religion?” In fact, he was endowed with indefatigable creative energy even during the difficult years of 1901 and 1902, and worked hard on his novel *Hadji Murat* and his last drama, *The Light Shines in Darkness*, which could see the light of day only after his death due to varied reasons.

Tolstoy had great respect and admiration for Indian religion and metaphysics, especially for the practical application of them to life by Jainism, Buddhism and social reformers like Kabir who discarded outright the traditional rituals. This is evident in his reply to A. Ramasehan, an Indian reformer and journalist who edited the popular journal, *The Aryan*, in Madras and who wrote to Tolstoy in June 1901 informing him of his fame and popularity in India:

Your religion is very old and very profound in its meta-physical definition of the relation of man to the spiritual All — the Atman; but I think it was maimed in its moral, i.e. practical application to life by the existence of caste. This practical application to life, so far as I know, has been made only by Jainism, Buddhism and some of your sects, such as Kabir Panthis in which the fundamental principle is the sacredness of life and consequently the prohibition to take the life of any living being, especially of man.

.....  
.... Therefore, I think, the duty of all civilized Indians

is to try to destroy all old superstitions, which hide from the masses the principles of true religion, i.e. consciousness of the divine essence of human soul and respect for the life of every human being, without any exception — and to spread them as far as possible. I think these principles are virtually, if not actually, contained in your ancient and profound religion and need only be developed and cleared from the veil that covers them.

I think that only such a mode of action can liberate the Indians from all the evils which now beset them and be the most efficacious means of attaining the goal which you are looking for. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 599-600)

The last seven years of Tolstoy's life, i.e. from 1903 to 1910, are significant in many respects. The year 1903 witnessed him protesting against the Jewish programme of persecution in Kishinyov, and writing three stories for an anthology to be brought out in Warsaw to help the victims of Jews' persecution. The same year he completed the fictional work, *After the Ball*, on the theme of physical violence which, however, could not be published in his life time. The next year his brilliant, long article titled "Shakespeare and the Drama" came out, and the same year he wrote a very good novel named *Hadji Murat* with a focus on his youth and the fighting in the Caucasus. During these last years of his life he wrote some very exciting and stimulating pamphlets like *Bethink Yourselves* dealing with the war between Russia and Japan, and *I cannot Be Silent* which consists of his serious attack on capital punishment. At that time he was also much concerned with the solution to land problem and the abolition of private property and spoke on them and other social, religious and political issues vociferously with such a rare courage as he became the centre of attention of the people all over the world. No wonder George Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi and many other illustrious persons of varied countries wrote letters to him, and people visited him to record his voice and prepare documentaries on him. However, all this made him overbusy and ad-

versely affected his health and already problematic family life. In 1906 he underwent a terrible shock because of the untimely sudden demise of Masha, his favourite daughter and disciple. His life became still more miserable because of his wife's hysterical outbursts and increasing neuroticism, and due to the problems related to copyright and his will. As a result, he found life so unbearable at the age of 82 that he left home once for all, and met his painful end in the house of the stationmaster at Astapovo. His wife, who was permitted to see him only when he was almost dead, kissed his forehead murmuring: "Forgive me" ( *Diaries of Sofya Andreyevna Tolstaya, 1910* 367) . The last words he uttered were: "To seek, always to seek" ( 367) . True, in the end he was, to quote the words of Isaiah Berlin, "a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus." It was, indeed, a horrible conclusion to his hard, restless and highly meaningful life.

Tolstoy had his own unique, unconventional concepts of socialism, religion and morality. In this context it is worthwhile to cite a part of his letter to Iso-Abe, the editor of a Japanese socialist newspaper, *Heimin Shimbun Sha*, which contained an article on Tolstoy's influence on the Japanese:

Though I never doubted that there are in Japan a great many reasonable, moral and religious men, who are opposed to the horrible crime of war which is now perpetrated by both betrayed and stupefied nations....

.....  
 ... I must tell you that I do not approve of socialism and am sorry to know that the most spiritually advanced part of your, so clever and energetic people, has taken from Europe the very feeble, illusory and fallacious theory of socialism, which in Europe is beginning to be abandoned.

Socialism has for its aim the satisfaction of the mean-est part of human nature: his material wellbeing, and by the means it proposes can never attain them. The true wellbeing of humanity is spiritual, i.e. moral,

and includes the material wellbeing. And this higher goal can be attained only by religious, i.e. moral perfection of all the units which compose nations and humanity.

By religion I understand the reasonable belief in a ( general for all humanity) law of God which practically is exposed in the precept of loving every man and doing to everybody what one wishes to be done to you. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 645)

Leo Tolstoy's early shaping years were immensely influenced by a near relation of his father — his second cousin —, Taryana Alexandrovna Yergolskaya ( 1792-1874 ), called Tarenka or 'tante Toinette' by the children in the house. She was in love with Leo's father, who proposed to her after his wife's death but she turned it down so as not to spoil her pure, poetic relations with him and the children. However, she took all care and responsibility of the children even without being their legal guardian. She had deep religious feelings which were infused into Leo who later admitted that he inherited from her the joy of a lonely, quiet life, and was inspired by her to take up creative writing. But he was angry with her rigid, outdated views on varied subjects. Her influence on his mind and art are evident in the hundreds of letters the two wrote to each other. Thus, to quote the words of R.F. Christian, "In *Childhood* the portrait of Nekhlyudov's mother contains certain features of tante Toinette's personality, as does the character of Nekhlyudov's aunt in *Boyhood*. There is no doubt either that some details of her life and position in Tolstoy's grandmother's home were used in creating the character of Sonya in *War and Peace*" ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.I 3) . Tolstoy records her influence on him and states that it

... consisted of all in teaching me from childhood the spiritual delight of love. She did not teach me that by words but by her whole being she filled me with love. I saw and felt how she enjoyed loving, and understood, the joy of love. That was the first thing. And the second was that she taught me the charm of an unhurried, tranquil life. ( Quoted in

Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* 39)

A near relation — the daughter of his grandfather's brother —, the Countess of Alexandra Andreyevna Tolstaya exerted considerable influence on Tolstoy who had a life-long relationship with her beginning from 1857. A spinster, she had a position of great influence because of her intimate connections at court and so could save Leo Tolstoy from persecution at the hands of State and Church. F.R. Christian is not far from the truth when he asserts that

... there was more than a shade of poetic love in their relationship, at least during the early years. On 12/24 May 1857 Tolstoy confided to his diary: 'Love stifles me, both carnal and ideal love', and it is very probable that had Alexandra been younger, Tolstoy would have fallen in love with her. 'If only Alexandra were ten years younger,' he wrote in his diary on 29 April/11 May 1857 — but although there was indeed scarcely more than ten years' difference in age between them, Tolstoy frequently addressed her in a jocular way as 'Granny'. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.I 103)

The lady liked him very much, but only to the extent of true friendship, and held that their 'pure simple friendship' belied the commonly accepted view that there could be no friendship between a woman and a man. Religion was the common subject of interest for them. She took keen interest in Tolstoy's spiritual growth right from the start of their intimacy. Indeed, he was much benefitted from her in his 'religious searchings' in the 1870s. But the two had diametrically opposite attitudes towards religion. Alexandra was orthodox out and out, and Tolstoy could not tolerate it for long. The result was that their relationship narrowly escaped the breaking point in 1880, but at last it came to an end with a fierce quarrel between the two in Petersburg in 1897, though even after that they continued to write to each other. About two hundred of their existing letters are surely a very useful source material to comprehend correctly the mind of Tolstoy the artist.

Of his brothers, the eldest one named Nikolay Nikolayevich Tolstoy influenced him the most. He was in army for more than a

decade, and was loved and respected very much by the novelist. His extraordinary intellectual and moral qualities and his unhypocritical life made him an object of great admiration. He was not only his brother but also his best friend. When Leo Tolstoy was just five years old, the wise elder brother invented the legend of the 'ant brotherhood' and 'green stick' and Leo was so enamoured of it that before his death he wished to be buried at the place where the 'green stick' was thought to be found, and his wish was fulfilled. Some of the characteristic traits of his personality are artistically painted by Leo Tolstoy in the story, "The Raid", and also in the artillery captain Tushin in *War and Peace*.

Leo Tolstoy felt the impact of the second of his three brothers named Sergey Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who was in military service for quite some time. He was very intimate with him all through his life. In his *Reminiscences of Childhood*, he fondly remembers and describes his brother briefly thus: "Nikolenka I loved, but Seryozha I admired, as something strange and incomprehensible to me. His was a human life, very beautiful, but completely incomprehensible to me, mysterious and therefore particularly attractive" ( 4) . Little wonder his love affairs during his days at the University of Kazan became the subject matter of Leo's story, "After the Ball". In addition, some of the salient features of his charming personality found reflection in the character of Volodya in *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*, and the delineation of the relationship between Natasha and Andrey Bolkonsky in *War and Peace* seems to be modelled on that of Sergey with Taryana Behrs. We have about 175 letters of Tolstoy to Sergey which are invaluable to understand the writer correctly.

Younger to him by two years, Countess Marya Tolstaya was very close to the writer. Her married life with her second cousin, Valeryan Petrovich Tolstoy, who was not only cynical but also of loose morals, was miserable and a complete failure, resulting in separation. Later, she fell in love with a Swede and spent a happy married life with him. But in between she developed intimacy with Turgenev who, according to his own admission, was almost in love with her. Little wonder she was the original of the heroine of his famous creative work, *Faust*, published in 1856. Tolstoy downright

disapproved of the intimacy between the two because he knew that Turgenev was at the same time having a close, amorous relationship with another woman named Pauline Viardot. This caused a rift in the relationship between the two illustrious Russians. A lover of music, Marya was an exceptionally religious person, given to miracles and superstitions, and she at last became a nun. Tolstoy's intimacy with her never decreased, and so it is not surprising that he, before finally leaving home in 1910, paid a visit to her. In his *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*, Tolstoy lovingly re-created her in the character of Lyuba.

The two sisters of Tolstoy's wife — Yelizaveta Andreyevna Behrs and Tatyana Andreyevna Behrs — mattered much to Tolstoy. The elder one, usually called Liza, was very scholarly, and so she collaborated with Tolstoy on the journal *Yasnaya Polyana*. She is important to Tolstoy's serious readers, for the novelist incorporated in his immortal character, Vera Rostova, several facets of his well-read, intellectual sister-in-law. Tolstoy's other sister-in-law, Tatyana, was passionate and gifted; she attempted to commit suicide after the unhappy love affair with Tolstoy's brother, Sergey, but later unexpectedly married her own cousin. Tolstoy has immortalized her by modelling Natasha Rostova of *War and Peace*, to a large extent, on her. Her book, *My Life at Home and at Yasnaya Polyana*, is invaluable to understand the mind of Tolstoy the writer. It is relevant here to cite the following extract from his letter to Liza dated 1 October 1862 to demonstrate her importance in shaping his ideas and art:

Your letter touched me deeply. It seems to me that as a result of it I have understood and recognised in you an old friend. But apart from that, your letter is of great significance to me as a living, rather than logical, confirmation — confirmation, that is, that my ideas are not only correct as ideas, but as life, as feeling. I would be very glad if this letter could be published, after omitting, of course, the names and everything personal. What would you say to that? At all events,

I beg you to write to me again and in greater detail and for publication. You yourself can't be aware of all the impor-

tance that your words have in my eyes and in the eyes of the public — words which stem from a source completely opposite to the one from which most literature comes — the heart. ( 171)

Perhaps the person that most made and marred Tolstoy the writer was Sofya Andreyevna Tolstaya, *nee* Behrs, who was his wife from September 1862 till his death. Tolstoy knew her mother's family for a long time as her grandfather happened to be a friend of Tolstoy's father. Naturally, Tolstoy visited her family from time to time and was fully familiar with her family circle. Sofya Andreyevna was deeply interested in reading and writing right from her early youth, and before her marriage wrote an interesting short story titled "Natasha". Fascinated by her, Tolstoy began to visit her family very frequently in the summer of 1862. It was a queer, difficult situation for the family as her elder sister Liza was yet to be married, and on this she wrote a realistic short story which Tolstoy chanced to read and was greatly impressed by it. The result was Tolstoy proposed to her on 16 September and soon they were married on 23 September 1862 in Moscow only after a brief courtship. Unfortunately, Tolstoy, just before marriage, gave her his diaries so that she might have a clear picture of her would-be husband's bachelor life, and the contents of the diaries rudely shocked an eighteen year old well-sheltered girl to the extent that she could never fully recover from it. Just after marriage she burnt with jealousy to see that a peasant woman, who had borne an illegitimate child to her husband, worked in her house every day. Then, she was groundlessly envious of her younger sister Tanya whom Tolstoy liked and loved in a fatherly way. Consequently, the early days of their married life were very difficult. However, soon the things settled down and the couple was very happy. They had eight children in the first eleven years of their marriage. Tolstoy was totally absorbed in his creative work, and his wife almost worshipped him as a writer and was always keen to help him in every possible manner. She would copy out and discuss whatever he wrote and gave him maximum time to write by shouldering the entire responsibility of children and other household works. As pointed out above, she was exceedingly interested in reading and writing and thus read

quite voraciously and maintained a diary. For fifteen years or so their married life was happy and fruitful in every respect. Her diaries reveal her intelligent and perceptive mind, strong will power and character and her desire to follow her husband's changing views. But she could not bear his unorthodox Christianity because of her strictly conventional religious beliefs. Also, she felt bitter about the gulf between his theory and practice of sex, and about his professed love for humanity, while he did not give adequate love and care to his wife and family. After 1881 much of her warmth for him cooled down and she craved for a life of her own without much obligation and sense of duty to her husband. Nevertheless, she continued to impart all care and protection to his literary activities by managing to publish his new works, by fighting against the censorship restrictions on his books like *The Krutzer Sonata* and by copying even those of his works which she hated. She translated Tolstoy's *On Life* into French. In her old age she developed interest in photography, painting and music. Besides, she published a story book for children, some poems in prose, her autobiography entitled *My Life*, and the first biographical essay on her husband. The tragic end of her young son Vanya in 1895 and the unhappy married life resulted in her Platonic love for Sergey Taneyev, a family friend and composer. After 1900 her relationship with her husband and family witnessed a steep deterioration. Little wonder she showed increasing symptoms of neurotic instability resulting in attempts at suicide towards the end of her life. However, she lived for nine years more after her husband's death in 1910.

In a study of Tolstoy, a mention should be made of his first three sons. The eldest one, Sergey Lvovich Tolstoy, was most successful and satisfying to his father, whose philosophical and social ideas were not always acceptable to him because of his scientific training and he was often reproached by his father for his Darwinism. An accomplished composer and teacher, he assisted his father in several of his activities and wrote a lot about him and others. His notable publications on his father include *Tolstoy Remembered by His Son*, "L. Tolstoy and P. Tchaikovsky" and "Music in the Life of L.N. Tolstoy". In addition, he prepared his mother's diaries for publica-



tion. Tolstoy's second son Ilya Lvovich Tolstoy initially made his father quite unhappy by his indifferent attitude to life. After undertaking several kinds of employments, he became a journalist for several years. He is important for a scholar of Tolstoy because he in 1920s worked as a consultant on films based on *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* which immensely disappointed him because of the frivolous changes in the originals. He occasionally lectured on his father and wrote several articles and memoirs about him, of which *My Reminiscences* (1914) is indispensable to attain a better understanding of Leo Tolstoy. His third son, Lev Lvovich Tolstoy, deserves a little space in this preface to his great father's art and ideas because he himself was a man of letters as well as a writer of several articles on his father and of a memoir focused on the difficult last phase of his parents' married life entitled *The Truth about My Father*. Interestingly, he wrote a fictional work called *The Chopin Prelude* which was written in reaction to his father's hotly debated novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Though he did not endorse his father's social and religious ideas, yet he took an active part in several of his social activities, particularly in the famine relief in Samara in 1891-1893 and in 1899.

Like his third son, referred to above, Tolstoy's eldest daughter, Tatyana Lvovna Tolstaya, is indispensable to comprehend Tolstoy's genius. She was a painter as well as a writer of several memoirs related to his father and his circle, of which two — *Friends and Guests at Yasnaya Polyana* and *About My Father's Death and the Reasons for His Leaving Home* — are invaluable. Besides, she left behind her diaries from her adolescence to the time of her father's death, published in 1950 under the heading *The Tolstoy Home: Diaries*. Also, she set up a Tolstoy Museum in Rome.

Tolstoy's second daughter named Marya Lvovna Tolstaya was always very intimate with Tolstoy both inwardly and outwardly. She was so much influenced by her father's ideas and ideals that she became a vegetarian in toto, and imbibed her father's love for country life, hard work and the underprivileged. She put his ideals into practice, and helped him by copying his manuscripts and letters. But she gave him the shock of his life by marrying the poor, lazy

Prince Obolensky. However, she continued to take care of him under all circumstances, and hence her untimely death at the age of thirty-five was almost an unbearable blow to him because she admittedly loved him the most of all the family members.

Like his dear daughter Marya, Tolstoy's youngest daughter, Alexandra Lvovna Tolstaya, was very close to him and was usually on his side in all his family feuds, particularly in his disputes with his wife. No wonder she was the only person accompanying him on his last journey and was beside him when he breathed his last. Her two books on him are of exceeding significance, namely *The Tragedy of Tolstoy* and *My Father*. For quite a long time, she was President of the Tolstoy Foundation in America where she had settled down at last. Tolstoy's last letter written to her on October 1910, less than two months before his death, is of utmost importance to comprehend his shattered mental state during the last days of his life due to his very bad relationship with his wife, and hence a part of it is worth quoting here:

I'm relying very much on the good influence of Tanya and Seryozha. The main thing is for them to understand and to try to make her understand that life with all this spying and eavesdropping, these everlasting reproaches, this ordering me about at her own sweet will, this everlasting checking up on me, this simulated hatred of the man who is closest and most necessary to me, this obvious hatred of me, but pretence of love — that such a life is not simply disagreeable to me but utterly impossible, and that if somebody has to drown himself, it is I and not she, and I only want one thing — to be free of her, and of the falsehood, pretence and malice which permeate her whole being. Of course they can't make her understand this, but they can make her understand that her whole behaviour towards me not only does not express love, but seems to have the obvious object of killing me, and that she will succeed in doing so, since I hope by the third attack which is threatening me, to release her and myself from that terrible situation we have been

living in and to which I have no wish to return.

You see, darling, how ill I am: I don't conceal it from you. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 713)

In his early literary career, Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov, a reputed poet and editor of a journal, meant much to Tolstoy, for he, along with I.I. Panayev, was in control of the famous journal titled *The Contemporary* launched by the renowned literateur, Pushkin, in 1836. This was the most famous journal in 1850s, and therefore Tolstoy was closely associated with it upto 1859. Thus, he gave his early creative works — viz. *Sevatopol Stories*, *Childhood*, *Boyhood* and *Youth* — to Nekrasov for publication. But soon he became dissatisfied with that journal due to its increasing interest in radical political ideas which he did not approve of at all.

In any genuine study of Tolstoy from any angle, a mention is to be made of his relationship with I.S. Turgenev, an author of the famous fictional works like *Fathers and Sons*, *A Nest of Gentlefolk*, *On the Eve*, *Rudin*, etc. It was he, a senior reputed writer, who enthusiastically extolled Tolstoy's early writing such as *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, and declared him as 'Gogol's successor'. No doubt, they quarrelled time and again ( and one of these quarrels has already been referred to above) , but this celebrated writer never altered his confirmed belief that Tolstoy was the greatest Russian writer till then. The two had a sort of love-hate relationship. Turgenev, notwithstanding his fathomless eulogy for Tolstoy, discarded outright the latter's preoccupation with religio-moral issues at the cost of art and literature, and also the primitive, extravagant, frank and rude facets of his personality. On the other hand, Tolstoy hated his fellow artist's 'aristocratic liberalism', urbanity and insincerity. As a matter of fact, their relationship always lacked mutual understanding, genuine respect and love. Turgenev's 43 and Tolstoy's 7 letters, which are easily available to us, bear witness to it.

A person outside his family, called Boris Nikolayevich Chicherin, mattered much to Tolstoy as a friend. He was a distinguished lawyer, liberal politician and historian of his time. He published a number of remarkable articles on varied subjects in well-known journals like *Voices from Russia*, *The Russian Herald*, etc. He was Professor of

Law at the University of Moscow from 1861 to 1868 and the Mayor of Moscow for about two years. Tolstoy was his close friend from 1856 onwards, and he admitted openly that he was fascinated by his sensitive, affectionate and receptive nature combined with his originality and gentleness. This was the reason why the young fictionist met him almost everyday and had long discussions on various subjects for years in continuation.

Another important, intimate friend of Tolstoy was Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet, who was a noted poet of the period. After eleven year service in the army, he sought voluntary retirement to become an owner of a large property at Stepanovkya near Tolstoy's estate of Yasnaya Polyana. A master of lyric poetry on love and nature, he echoed the Romantics and foreshadowed the Symbolists. He also translated the great writings in Latin and German. Tolstoy came in his close contact during his intimacy with Petersburg literary circles. Their common deep interest in literature made them fast friends, and during the early years of Tolstoy's married life Fet was perhaps his closest friend. But the former's religious crisis in the 1870s ruptured their relations because Fet, innately conservative in his opinions on all subjects, was diametrically opposite of Tolstoy in all religious and ethical matters. However, the two often sent their writings to each other for critical opinion. Little wonder Fet's book, *My Reminiscences*, abounds in invaluable information about the great Russian fictionist. In a letter dated 17/29 October 1860, Tolstoy wrote to him about his firm belief in morality and his rejection of art, like that of Fet, as a lie:

Well, of course, while there is the desire to eat, you eat...while there is the unconscious, stupid desire to know and speak the truth, you try to know and speak it. That's the one thing left to me from the world of morality, higher than which I've been unable to rise; it's the one thing that I'll go on doing, only not in the form of your art. Art is a lie, and I can no longer love a beautiful lie. ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.I 142)

During his visit to England in March 1861 Tolstoy met several times a well-known intellectual cum creative writer named A.I. Herzen

who was given to radical ideas that flourished in the environment of utopian socialism and German idealism of that period. He was highly dissatisfied with the contemporary Russia's social and political climate which found an expression in his essays, stories and novels. His masterly fictional narrative, *Who Is to Blame?*, concentrated on the theme of the 'superfluous man' in Russian society. He caught the attention of most of the thinkers and writers of his time including Leo Tolstoy. He launched two journals, *The Polar Star* and *The Bell*, which attracted Tolstoy. However, his influence began to wane around the year 1861 when he vehemently opposed the Russian revolutionaries. The following brief extract from Tolstoy's letter dated 14/26 March 1861 clearly evinces Herzen's influence on him:

Apart from its general interest, you can't imagine how interesting I found all the information about the Decembrists in *The Polar Star*. About 4 months ago I began a novel, the hero of which is to be a Decembrist returning from exile. I wanted to have a talk with you about it, but I didn't manage to. My Decembrist is to be an enthusiast, a mystic, a Christian, returning to Russia in 1856 with his wife and his son and daughter, and applying his stern and somewhat idealised views to the new Russia. Please tell what you think about the propriety and the opportuneness of such a subject. Turgenev, to whom I read the beginning, liked the first chapters. ( 145)

Strangely enough, Tolstoy left unfinished the above-mentioned novel, *The Decembrists*, after completing only three chapters for reasons best known to him, and focused on the theme of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Fet was a common friend of both Tolstoy and Turgenev, and tried his best to end their misunderstanding and quarrel.

In 1856 Tolstoy used to meet almost regularly N.G Chernyshevsky in Petersburg and would frequently refer to his views on social, political and literary issues in his diaries and letters of that time. Chernyshevsky was a champion of utilitarianism and a staunch opponent of aestheticism which incurred Turgenev's and Tolstoy's displeasure. A journalist, creative writer and critic, he wrote

a good number of articles on Russian writers including Turgenev, Gogol and Tolstoy. His revolutionary ideas landed him in prison for years and thereafter in exile in Siberia for about twenty years. When Tolstoy brought out the first number of his journal, he sent a copy of it to him with the request "to read it through carefully and to express your opinion about it frankly and seriously in *The Contemporary*" ( 154) , and the latter obliged him by writing a balanced review of the former's work in 1862.

From 1859 to 1877 Tolstoy was quite close to M.N. Katkov, who was a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Moscow early in his career but later on became a journalist of repute after becoming the owner of the journal, *The Russian Herald*, in 1856. Katkov and his *The Russian Herald* are very important for a scholar of Tolstoy because the latter published in this journal some of his major fictional works like *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, and most of *Anna Karenina*. The last of these books caused a rift between Tolstoy and Katkov when the latter "refused to publish the last part of it which seemed to him to ridicule Russian popular sentiment towards fellow Slavs in the continuing series of Balkan wars, particularly the Serbo-Turkish War for which Vronsky enlists after Anna's death. Tolstoy never published in *The Russian Herald* again" ( 156) .

During the decade commencing from 1863, a very important person in Tolstoy's literary career was Nikolay Nikolayevich Strakhov, a noted literary critic, philosopher, journalist and teacher of mathematics and natural sciences. His highly favourable review of *War and Peace* brought him very close to Tolstoy and he spent almost every summer at Tolstoy's upto the end of his life. The fictionist held him in high esteem for his literary judgement and philosophical knowledge. Therefore, he got *Anna Karenina* read by him and gratefully acknowledged the corrections and suggestions he made. Also, he was associated with Tolstoy's the *Primer*, and was the editor of his works published in 1873. About 300 letters that the two wrote to each other are of vital significance to understand fully Tolstoy the man and artist, and the author himself admitted: "Tolstoy once singled out Strakhov and Prince Urusov, together with Alexandra Tolstaya, as the three people to whom he wrote the most letters of interest

'to those who may be interested in my personality'" ( 227) . True, Tolstoy's epistolary discussions with Strakhov are of extraordinary importance to comprehend the inner states of his mind, his ideas about the complexity or the conflicting facets of life — sensual, spiritual, etc. The following extract from his letter to him dated 19-22 November 1879 is very pertinent in this connection:

There are people who live by the flesh alone and don't understand how it is possible to shift one's centre of gravity to the spiritual life. By shifting one's centre of gravity to the spiritual life I mean guiding one's activity by spiritual aims. There are people who live by the flesh and understand — only understand — the spiritual life. There are fortunate people — our peasants, or the Buddhists about whom you spoke, you remember — who live the full life of the flesh until they are 50 and then suddenly shift to the other foot, the spiritual one, and stand on it. There are still more fortunate people for whom doing the will of the Father is true meat and drink and who have stood on this spiritual foot since they were young. But there are unfortunate people like you and me whose centre of gravity is in the middle and who have forgotten how to walk and stand. In the world in which we live, everything is so confused — all the things of the flesh are so clothed in spiritual attire, all the things of the spirit so plastered over with those of the flesh — that it is difficult to distinguish them. I am worse than you, and therefore more fortunate in this misfortune. The passions of the flesh were stronger in me and it is easier for me to shake myself free and to distinguish the one from the other, but you are completely confused. You want the good, but regret that there is not more evil in you; that you have no passions....

.....  
 In Christ's teaching I found one particular feature distinguishing it from all other teachings. He teaches

and explains why the meaning of our life is the one he gives to it. But he always says besides that one must carry out what he says and then you will see whether what he says is true. Either: light was given to the world but men loved darkness because their deeds were evil. Or: whoever believes in the Son of Man, the same will do God's deeds. Here is the meta-physical knot, and it can't be untied by one's whole life.

Believe me, transfer your centre of gravity to the spiritual world, and all the aims of your life, all your desires will stem from it, and you will then find peace in life. Do God's works, carry out the will of the Father, and you will then see the light and understand.... ( 336)

As stated above, Tolstoy's friendship with S.S. Urusov was very rewarding to him even as fictionist. It is a common belief that the philosophy of history and war as presented in *War and Peace* was, to a considerable degree, influenced by the theories of Urusov, a famous mathematician and writer of his age. Significantly enough, Urusov's remarkable work, *A Survey of the Campaigns of 1812-13, Military-Mathematical Problems and the Railways*, opens with a mention of *War and Peace*, and with the admission that Tolstoy's *magnum opus* impelled him to write his book, which is interspersed with references to the novel and its author's views on war and history. The letters they mailed to each other during these years fully reveal the fact that the two often discussed the subject candidly. Undoubtedly, Urusov's theories "help to account for the frequent recourse in *War and Peace* to mathematical parallels and the many references to the existence of certain immutable laws governing human activity" ( 233) .

Around the year 1878 when Tolstoy was busy in gathering material for his projected novel about the Decembrists, he developed intimacy with Pyotr Nikolayevich Svistnov, a well-known Decembrist who had to undergo a ten-year severe imprisonment in Siberia due to his active participation in the uprising. The novelist met him at least twice in that year because the latter was closely associated with the uprising and its aftermath. He was deeply inter-

ested in hearing his reminiscences as well as those of A.P. Belyaev, another noted Decembrist. The same year, Tolstoy chanced to come across Vladimir Vasilyevich Stasov, a literary historian, music and art critic, and archaeologist who headed the Fine Arts Department of the Petersburg Public Library for years. He was a staunch admirer of Tolstoy's fictional works, but was thoroughly opposed to his religious ideas.

Around the year 1882 Tolstoy chanced to know the young journalist Mikhail Alexandrovich Engelhardt whose views were hostile to the Orthodox Church. Tolstoy read his article against the Church and wrote him a long letter which is significant in that it contained the former's grasp of the Christian attitude to violence, the essence of the Sermon on the Mount and his consciousness of his failure in adhering to his convictions. Apropos of his understanding of essential Christianity, he remarked in the letter written to him on 20 December 1882: "If I knew nothing of Christ's teaching apart from these 5 rules, I would be just as much a Christian as I am now: ( 1) Do not be angry. ( 2) Do not fornicate. ( 3) Do not swear. ( 4) Do not judge. ( 5) Do not make war. This is what the essence of Christ's teaching is for me" ( *Tolstoy's Letters*, Vol.II 361) .

An eminent Russian painter of Tolstoy's age, Nikolay Nikolayevich Gay was one of the persons immensely influenced by Tolstoy's moral and religious ideas. The two were so close to each other mentally that Tolstoy once remarked: "If I am not in the room, Nikolay Nikolayevich can answer you: he will say the same thing as me" ( 366) . Indeed, the two loved and respected each other very much both as man and as artist. Small wonder this distinguished painter illustrated Tolstoy's famous story, "What Men Live By". But perhaps the most devoted disciple of Tolstoy was Vladimir Grigoryevich Chertkov who exposed and popularised his moral and religious views both in Russia and abroad. Also, he managed to publish abroad Tolstoy's works which were banned in Russia. It was as a result of the novelist's inspiration that in 1884 he established the publishing firm, *The Intermediary*. Their relationship began in 1883 and by 1889 he was deeply involved in Tolstoy's day-to-day life and took care of all kinds of his writings and papers. Perhaps,

this was one of the causes of the novelist's increasing rift with his wife, who did not like his so much participation in her husband's personal matters. However, Tolstoy continued the same sort of relationship with Chertkov, with the result he wrote in his legal will that all his papers were to be in the latter's possession after his death and he was to decide finally what to publish and what not. Naturally, after Tolstoy's death, he edited and published his works, and also edited for many years the journal named *The Voice of Tolstoy and Unity*. It was in the fitness of things that he was the general editor of the Jubilee edition of Tolstoy's writings in 90 volumes.

Two of Tolstoy's eminent compatriots, namely Leonid Yegorovich Obolensky and Prince L.D. Urusov, were irresistibly fascinated by his ideas. The first one wrote a lot about Tolstoy that later appeared in 1887 in the form of a book named *L.N. Tolstoy: His Philosophical and Moral Ideas*, while the second one was a close friend of the illustrious author who spent a lot of time with him during his illness and was rudely shocked by his untimely death. Then, in order to understand Tolstoy the artist adequately, we have to be familiar with Fyodor Fyodorovich Tishchenko's writings on him and Tolstoy's valuable letter written to him on 12 December 1886. This minor writer of that age wrote about him two memoirs known as *How Count Tolstoy Teaches Writing* and *L.N. Tolstoy: Reminiscences and Characteristics*. The very titles of these books explicate the importance of their contents. A part of Tolstoy's letter to him, mentioned above, is cited below to have a better idea of his concept of art and fiction writing:

Forgive me, dear friend, for writing to you so outspokenly. I want to stave you off from a frivolous attitude to art. It is a great thing, and cannot be undertaken for fun or for purposes outside art. But you are capable of mastering art, in order to serve people by means of it.

You could end the story with the murder of the general, or the murder of the shop-assistant and the wife's return to her husband, or with the death of either of them, as the story might have ended in real life, and

you could bring to it all the truth and illumination which comes from its author's view of life. If you had to bring in the general and the shopkeeper, you should have brought them in at the beginning, and in describing the events to do with them, you should have described them too with the same love and detailed description of their inner impulses, as Katerina and Semyon are described, otherwise it will be like a picture with a caption saying 'this is a man'. You describe Karpinsky at length, but he is still not alive. ( 408)

The epistolary relationship between Tolstoy and Romain Rolland is of immense importance in several ways. The French Nobel laureate, who was a famous novelist, historian and biographer, came under his influence at an early age of seventeen as student. He wrote Tolstoy several letters, but could get a reply only to his letter dated 16 April 1887 which is significant because it contained his well thought-out views on physical and intellectual labour. Unfortunately, its English translation could not be available to me and hence no extract from it can be cited here. In his biography of Tolstoy, *Vie de Tolstoi*, which was first published in 1911 after one year of his death, the illustrious French author points out in the very introduction that he felt the impact of his early novels instantly, that his later social and moral ideas were a big surprise to him, and that he was very inquisitive to know fully the great Russian's moral ideas and apparently negative view of art. He could never forget the distinguished Russian's conviction that not to know "the moral essence of things" meant "not to live". In addition to the full-length biography, Rolland also wrote two very useful articles on Tolstoy.

Tolstoy was appreciative of the moral and aesthetic ideas of others. This is evident from his intimacy with Gavriil Andreyevich Rusanov and Alexander Ivanovich Ertel. After having read with immense interest and admiration Tolstoy's fiction and his book *A Confession*, Rusanov discussed with him time and again varied religious and social issues and the two also often talked about literature and aesthetic sensibility. Likewise, A.I. Ertel and Tolstoy understood and appreciated each other's spiritual and social ideas.

Naturally, Tolstoy wrote a very good introduction to his famous novel, *The Gardenins*. He was also a great admirer of his command of the Russian language and published his several stories in his magazine, *The Intermediary*.

Among the Tolstoyans, Ernest Crosby, an American social reformer, is quite prominent. He felt the impact of Tolstoy's ethical and religious ideas so much so that he resigned from the post of a judge in the International Court in Egypt and came back to America to live after the model of the great Russian. He visited his master at Yasnaya Polyana in May 1894, and following the latter's advice, he worked for tax reform and for pacifism. He arranged for an American edition of *Resurrection*, wrote an impressive article titled "Two Days with Count Tolstoy" and a full-length book, *Tolstoy and His Message*. Importantly, Tolstoy wrote an introduction to his book, *Shakespeare's Attitude towards the Working Class*.

An ardent Tolstoyan, John Coleman Kenworthy, an English writer and lay preacher, came under the sweeping influence of Tolstoy's ethical and religious ideas and ideals. As a result, he wrote a book entitled *The Anatomy of Misery*, which Tolstoy liked so much so that he got it translated into Russian, and also wrote an introduction to the third English edition of it. But unfortunately he had bad relations with most of Tolstoy's friends and followers. However, he carried out translations of Tolstoy's works which were not upto the mark because of his poor understanding of the Russian language. Later on, Tolstoy severed relations with him because of the latter's hostility towards the Tolstoyans. His two books on Tolstoy — *Tolstoy: His Teaching and Influence in England* and *Tolstoy: His Life and Works* — are essential for a proper understanding of Tolstoy's ideas and milieu.

For a study of Tolstoy in English, Aylmer Maude is indispensable because he is the best English translator of Tolstoy's writings, his authentic biographer, and the author of a few good books and articles on him. In recognition of these works, the British Government gave him pension. Right after his first meeting with Tolstoy in 1888, the two became very intimate with each other, and the Englishman felt the impact of the Russian's ideas. He brought out

two illuminating books on him, viz. *Tolstoy and His Problems* and *The Life of Tolstoy*. Also, he translated and published the centenary edition of Tolstoy's writings in twenty-one volumes in the series of Oxford World Classics.

Eminent novelist and playwright, Maxim Gorky came in contact with Tolstoy at the beginning of 1900, and was soon influenced by the latter so much so that he wanted to establish a Tolstoyan agricultural colony. Tolstoy was also much impressed by him and called him "a real man of the people." The two met each other several times, particularly in the Crimea where both were forced to go for health reasons. Gorky's famous work, *Recollections of Tolstoy*, is of immense value for a scholar of Tolstoy. A short extract from one of Tolstoy's letters to Gorky, containing his glowing tribute to the latter both as man and writer, is worth citing here: "I always liked your writing, but I found you better than your writing. See what a compliment I am paying you, the value of which, particularly, is the fact that it is sincere. Well, goodbye; I cordially press your hand in friendship" ( 586) .

The name of John Bellows, an English Quaker who met Tolstoy several times, should be mentioned in this introduction to Tolstoy's creative genius because of his disparaging opinion about the Russian's commendable fictional work, *Resurrection*. He rejected the novel on the ground of its negative treatment of sex with special reference to Maslova's seduction scene. But Tolstoy seemed to disagree with him and in his defence he wrote to him the letter dated 24 November/ 7 December 1901. The most relevant part of it is cited below:

You may be right but I think not for every person which will read the book. It can have a bad influence over persons who will read not the whole book and not take in the sense of it. It might also have quite the opposite influence so as it was intended to. All what I can say in my defence is that when read a book the chief interest for me is the Weltanschauung des Authors, what he likes and what he hates. And I hope that the reader who will read my book with the same view

will find out what the author likes or dislikes and will be influenced with the sentiment of the author. And I can say that when I wrote the book I abhorred with all my heart the lust, and to express this abhorrence was one of the chief aims of the book.

If I have failed in it I am very sorry and I am pleading guilty if I was so inconsiderate in the scene of which you write, that I could have produced such a bad impression on your mind.

I think that we will be judged by our conscience and by God — not for the results of our deeds, which we can not know, but our intentions. And I hope that my intentions were not bad. ( 606-607)

A famous painter and the father of the Nobel prize winner novelist Borisa Pasternak, Leonid Osipovich Pasternak merits a mention in this essay on Tolstoy, not because he was quite close to Tolstoy and the two used to meet frequently, but because he prepared illustrations for *War and Peace* and *Resurrection*, and produced some wonderful paintings related to Tolstoy such as *Tolstoy Mowing* and *Tolstoy in His Vaulted Study*.

Some of Tolstoy's works were banned by the censor, but his admirers and followers made them reach the reading public even at great risk. In this connection, a landowner named Alexander Mikhaylovich Bodyansky deserves a few words. This man not only launched a Tolstoyan newspaper which was forced to be stopped by the censor only after a few issues, but also dauntlessly distributed Tolstoy's banned writings on account of which he was arrested and sent to prison for six months. Another bold landowner and liberal politician, Mikhail Alexandrovich Stakhovich, was a great friend and follower of Tolstoy. He accompanied him in his famous march in April 1886 from Moscow to Tula against the Russian Government. Small wonder Tolstoy dedicated his remarkable short creative work "Strider" to him. Then there was Nikolay Vasilyevich Davydov, a renowned lawyer of that period and an intimate friend of Tolstoy who would seek advice from him on several matters and who was often a source of inspiration to his creative works like *The*

*Power of Darkness, The Fruits of Enlightenment* and *A Living Corpse*, and contributed considerably to his last fictional masterpiece, *Resurrection*. He was for quite some time the President of the Moscow Tolstoy Society, and, as he admitted in his memoirs, was much influenced, despite his different kind of life, by Tolstoy's concepts of human relationships and religious faith.

An English creative artist, a Nobel laureate, H.G. Wells was much too impressed by Tolstoy's genius; he perused almost all of his works, was enamoured of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and sent him his works including the unconventional *A Modern Utopia* for his perusal and comments much against the advice of his friend Aylmer Maude who warned him that the celebrated Russian would not like his work at all. But contrary to Well's fears, Tolstoy admitted to have derived pleasure from his writings.

The relationship between Tolstoy and Bernard Shaw is important to understand the mind and art of both. In December 1906, Shaw, who was profoundly impressed by Tolstoy's genius, sent him *Man and Superman* along with a couple of other books for his perusal and comments. Initially, Shaw's famous play created a bad impression on him, but on re-reading it he found it worthwhile and wrote him a letter containing his criticism of the play. In 1909 he told his friend Alymer Maude that he found Shaw's plays interesting but the British dramatist "suffered from the defect of wanting to be original" ( 677) . However, he proclaimed that there were only very few good writers "except, perhaps, Shaw." The following extract from Tolstoy's letter to Shaw is significant in that it demonstrates his attitude towards Shaw's theology, his idea of God and evil, etc.:

Your remark that the preaching of righteousness has generally little influence on people and that young men regard as laudable that which is contrary to righteousness is quite correct. It does not however follow that such preaching is unnecessary. The reason of the failure is that those who preach do not fulfil what they preach, i.e. hypocrisy.

I also cannot agree with what you call your theology. You enter into controversy with that which no thinking person

of our time believes or can believe: with a God-creator. And yet you seem to recognise a God who has got definite aims comprehensible to you. 'To my mind', you write, ' unless we conceive God engaged in a continual struggle to surpass himself as striving at every birth to make a better man than before, we are conceiving nothing better than an omnipotent snob.'

Concerning the rest of what you say about God and about evil, I will repeat the words I said, as you write, about your *Man and Superman*, namely that the problem about God and evil is too important to be spoken of in jest. And therefore I tell you frankly that I received a very painful impression from the concluding words of your letter: 'Suppose the world were only one of God's jokes, would you work any the less to make it a good joke instead of a bad one?' ( 700)

Tolstoy's private library at Yasnaya Polyana had several of Shaw's plays having many marginal comments. Shaw, on his part, was certainly a great admirer of Tolstoy and his writings. In a letter written to Henry Arthur Jones in May 1898, he declared *What Is Art?* by Tolstoy as the best critical work on art. Also, he endorsed Tolstoyism, to a large degree, as is evident from his letter of February 1900 to R. Ellis Roberts. Not only this, he made a list of five great men who had built the "intellectual consciousness of the race," and that included the name of Leo Tolstoy, besides Nietzsche, Wagner, Schopenhauer and Ibsen.

Tolstoy influenced M.K. Gandhi through his writings. The great Indian had read his ethical works with immense interest, and consequently he founded a Tolstoyan farm in the Transvaal in 1910. Tolstoy was very keen to see the application of *satyagraha* as a mode of protest in South Africa, and Gandhiji did it. In 1909 Gandhiji wrote to Tolstoy to apprise him of the condition of the Indians in the Transvaal and to seek his permission to publish the English translation of the latter's long letter to Tarakwatta Das known as "Letter to a Hindu" which appeared in March 1910 in the newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, edited by Gandhiji. A part of Tolstoy's letter written to



Gandhiji on 25 September/ 8 October 1909 is cited below:

I have just received your most interesting letter which has given me great pleasure. God helps our dear brothers and coworkers in the Transvaal. That same struggle of the tender against the harsh, of meekness and love against pride and violence, is every year making itself more and more felt here among us also, especially in one of the very sharpest of the conflicts of the religious law with the worldly laws — in refusals of military service. Such refusals are becoming ever more and more frequent

.....  
As to the word reincarnation, I should not myself like to omit it, for, in my opinion, belief in reincarnation can never be as firm as belief in the soul's immortality and in God's justice and love. You may, however, do as you like about omitting it. The translation into, and circulation of my letter in the Hindoo language, can only be a pleasure for me. ( 692)

Gandhiji was particularly influenced by his book, *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, and referred to it in his autobiography. Also, he practised his doctrine of non-resistance to achieve freedom for his country from the British imperialism.

Thus, we see that Tolstoy's art and ideas fascinated people the world over. Despite the downright censure of some of his works in his country, he had almost a multitude of admirers and followers in the world. What is especially worth mentioning in this connection is the fact that he was a perennial fountainhead of inspiration to Lenin and his fellow revolutionaries who ushered in a radical change in the socio-political structure of Russia. Importantly, Lenin, in his remarkable article titled "L.N. Tolstoy", accentuated Tolstoy's unmistakable greatness and influence in these words:

"The epoch of preparation for revolution in one of the countries under the heel of serf-owners became, thanks to its brilliant illumination by Tolstoy, a step forward in the artistic development of humanity as a whole."

The understanding of human psychology changed. Writers once explained a man's actions by his

## 2

## "LARGE LOOSE BAGGY MONSTERS": HENRY JAMES'S RADICAL CRITIQUE OF LEO TOLSTOY'S FICTION

A born American and a naturalized English man, Henry James is one of the rare literary phenomena in whom we perceive a happy coalescence of critic and creator — Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot —, and who have given a new turn and direction to the genre to which they have contributed creative and critical writings. Thus, besides producing a fairly good number of fictional masterpieces between 1880 and 1914, Henry James has given us a solid body of criticism embodying his literary opinions steeped in the vision of a great theorist of fiction. A voracious reader, a prolific writer, and perhaps the most outstanding scholar of fiction, he read almost all the notable fictionists of Europe and America, and expressed his definite views on them. Obviously, a great contemporary like Tolstoy could not escape his attention ( Geoffrey Keynes, *Henry James in Cambridge* 14) , though he was deeply fascinated by the great French fiction masters and was most enamoured of Turgenev of all Russian writers. In his stupendous corpus of expository writings — critical essays, fairly long prefaces to his creative writings, portraits, reviews, letters, conversations, etc. —, we find Henry James referring to Tolstoy many times, directly and indirectly, thus offering us a radical critique of his fictional genius, best expressed in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Since James was a fictionist first and foremost with his fixed concept of the art of the novel, he could not be truly impartial and detached in his evaluation of Tolstoy's fictional art and his masterpieces. As a matter of fact, in his cogitations on Tolstoy and his works, he is usually governed and guided by his theory of fiction, propounded mostly under the impact of the French novelists like Flaubert, Balzac,

Stendhal and others. Thus, it is not surprising if his critical statements about the great Russian writer are often flawed.

The youthful, fastidious and truly cosmopolitan James, with an exceptional sense of proportion and form, refused to take Tolstoy seriously in his initial contact with his works. Though *The Cossacks* appeared in New York first in 1878 and before that in 1862 the translation of his early autobiographical work reached the English-speaking public, he was first introduced to the English people in 1880s when Henry James had leapt into eminence with the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1881. It was in 1886 that the first English version of *War and Peace*, translated from the French language, was available to the people of England. Henry James, who had settled down in London by that time, perhaps would have got the opportunity of perusing Tolstoy's *magnum opus* at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, though we do not have any definite evidence as when he first lay his hand on *War and Peace*. As he was a very serious reader, writer and critic of fiction, he must have taken immense pains to read this epical novel as closely as possible. It was in 1897 that James, for the first time, passed his judgement on Tolstoy when he wrote a brilliant short critical essay entitled "Turgenev and Tolstoy." Though this article is primarily concerned with Turgenev whom Henry James unequivocally admired throughout his life, it contains some very interesting and incisive observations on Tolstoy and his two great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

James, while admiring Turgenev, admits the greatness of Tolstoy because his favourite Russian, Turgenev, who was Tolstoy's senior by ten years, had pleaded, towards the end of his life, to the latter to resume his literary activities which he had abandoned for quite some time:

"I am on my death-bed; there is no possibility of my recovery. I write you expressly to tell you how happy I have been to be your contemporary, and to utter my last, my urgent prayer. Come back; my friend, to your literary labours. That gift came to you from the source from which all comes to us. Ah, how happy I should be could I think you would listen to my entreaty!

My friend, great writer of our Russian land, respond to it, obey it!" ( Henry James, *The House of Fiction* 170)

James's observant eye could see it clearly that Tolstoy was gaining fame gradually and steadily, and that after the death of Turgenev he could ascend great heights on account of the growing popularity of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* throughout the world. He accepted him as a great writer, and felt that he was mainly for "home consumption," though his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, was more popular in Europe and America than Turgenev's *A House of Gentlemen*, *On the Eve* or *Smoke*. James had unreserved praise for Turgenev and called him "the novelists' novelist" ( 170) because of his extraordinary influence on contemporary fictionists, but he could accord only restricted, rather partial, praise to Tolstoy's novels because he could discern in them only a presentation of the vastness of life with lamentable indifference to the method of delineation. To quote his own words:

The perusal of Tolstoy — a wonderful mass of life — is an immense event, a kind of splendid accident, for each of us: his name represents nevertheless no such eternal spell of method, no such quiet irresistibility of presentation, as shines, close to us and lighting our possible steps, in that of his precursor ( Turgenev) . Tolstoy is a reflector as vast as a natural lake; a monster harnessed to his great subject — all human life! — as an elephant might be harnessed, for purposes of traction, not to a carriage, but to a coach-house. His own case is prodigious, but his example for others dire: disciples not elephantine he can only mislead and betray. ( 170-71)

As is evident from the extract, quoted above, James, despite his strong dislike and rejection of Tolstoy-like fictional genius, cannot afford to ignore his astonishing power of re-creating almost the entire human life. Perhaps, Tolstoy is the only novelist whose subject matter is the whole mass of life, and this is the primary reason of Virginia Woolf's or E.M. Forster's unrestrained admiration for his works. Indeed, his novels are an amazing attempt at projecting, and reflecting on, life in all its vastness. If he cannot have staunch disciples and imitators, it is because he is too great to be followed

in this regard, and James is correct when he affirms that he cannot be a safe model for others and to follow him is to run an excessive artistic risk. Tolstoy evinces a rare skill in portraying the innermost as well as the outer life — the skill which is the hallmark of Turgenev's genius that James eulogized throughout his life. While Turgenev wondered at this side of Tolstoy's genius and pleaded with him not to stop writing fiction when the latter decided to do so, James could not appreciate this unique feature of Tolstoy's mind and art which impressed Turgenev, "the novelists' novelist" in James's considered opinion, and could only care for the delineation of "a fine conscience," to quote Joseph Conrad's words ( "Henry James: An Appreciation," *Notes on Life and Letters* 19) . In fact, James miserably failed to comprehend the greatness of Tolstoy simply because the latter was not as much consciously concerned with technique as James was, though he was no less a laboured artist than James as is evident from the fact that he revised and rewrote *War and Peace* several times to give his presentation of the mass of life as much meaningful and artistic a shape as he could.

In his article on Emile Zola, written in 1903, Henry James, again, refers to Tolstoy and his *War and Peace*. He admires the French naturalist's *La Debacle*, and to show its greatness he places it beside the eminent Russian's masterpiece. While he admits that Zola's novel is not as universal as Tolstoy's, though the former work is better shaped and more compact than the latter. Apropos of this, James observes:

As for *La Debacle*, finally, it takes its place with Tolstoy's very much more universal but very much less composed and condensed epic as an incomparably human picture of war. ( "Emile Zola, 1903," *The House of Fiction* 248)

Thus, by implication, James points to Tolstoy's epical and universal genius. He does not find any other author but Tolstoy and his book to demonstrate the essential greatness of Zola's *La Debacle* which he considers remarkable and hence puts it beside *War and Peace*.

While admitting Tolstoy's greatness, James, a votary of form, method and technique, warns a practitioner of the art of fiction not

to separate method or manner from matter of which the Russian litterateur is a supreme example, for in him there is all stress on matter — the mass of life — and little attention to form and technique. His epical, inimitable genius could paint a wonderful picture of society and could produce in *War and Peace* a novel with matchless length and breadth. James's article titled "The New Novel," written in 1914 just a year before his death, offers a piece of advice to the younger generation of English fictionists, influenced by Tolstoy, that they may learn the art of presenting artistically life in all its vastness and the social milieu, but they should not follow his example of the estrangement of subject matter from method:

We should have only to remount the current with a certain energy to come straight up against Tolstoy as the great illustrative masterhand on all this ground of the disconnection of method from the matter — which encounter, however, would take us much too far, so that we must for the present but hang off from it with the remark that of all great painters of the social picture it was given that epic genius most to serve admirably as a rash adventurer and a 'caution', and execrably, pestilentially, as a model. In this strange union of relations he stands alone: from no other great projector of the human image and the human idea is so much truth to be extracted under an equal leakage of its value. All the proportions in him are so much the largest that the drop of attention to our nearer cases might by its violence leave little of that principle alive; which fact need not disguise from us, none the less, that as Mr. H.G. Wells and Mr. Arnold Bennett, to return to them briefly again, derive, by multiplied if diluted transmissions, from the great Russian..., so, observing the distances, we may profitably detect an unexhausted influence in our minor, our still considerably less rounded vessels. ( Henry James, *Selected Literary Criticism* 368)

Besides the unbridgeable gulf between matter and manner, between subject and technique, which, according to James, makes the monumental fictional works of Tolstoy faulty and bad models to be followed by others, what the American-cum-British fictionist-critic

laments most in the Russian artist is the lack of a controlling idea or the centre of interest or the central theme and the sense of the whole. James holds that notwithstanding the extraordinary length and breadth of the vision of life, the picture of the world, painted in *War and Peace*, the book wholly disappoints a discerning reader in search of the commanding idea or the effect of wholeness in a great work of art. Patently, James seems to fail miserably in perceiving the thematic grandeur and the artistic excellence of the greatest novel of the world — *War and Peace* ( E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and several others consider it so) — when he asserts that anyone can mark the conspicuous presence of the central idea and the structural wholeness in such little known works as Hugh Walpole's *Duchess of Wrexe* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* ( 368) .

In many of his thousands of letters, Henry James refers to, or comments directly or obliquely on, Leo Tolstoy. It is essential to analyse some of them here. In the letter written to his widely known brother William James on 1 October 1887, he condemns one of Howells's critical pieces, which appeared in the magazine, *Harper*, because of his poor critical faculty as shown in his statement on the delineation of life in the novel illustrating from Tolstoy. Since James as fictionist was too much interested in form and comparatively a little in life, he could not bear Howells's observations in this connection with special reference to Tolstoy. He was so much disgusted with, and annoyed by, Howells's critical piece on fiction with instances from the celebrated Russian novelist that he wanted him to stop writing critical essays and devote himself only to fiction writing. He wrote:

He ( Howells) seems to me as little as possible of a critic and exposes himself so that I wish he would "quit," and content himself with writing the novel as he thinks it should be and not talking about it: he does the one so much better than the other. He talks from too small a point of view and his examples ( barring the bore he makes of Tolstoi) are smaller still. There is, it seems to me, far too much talk around and about the novel in proportion to what is done. Any *genre* is good

which has life — which of course is perfectly consistent with the fact that there are some that find it mighty hard to have it and others that one very much prefers to some. But I am sprawling into quires and reams. ( *Henry James Letters*, Vol.III 204)

A fairly long letter, written by James to Mrs. Humphry Ward on 26 July 1899, also merits some consideration here. It sets forth his belief that a writer usually cannot afford to delineate a subject or a person without presenting himself behind it. He admits that he is "always behind with everything," but it should not be taken as an expression of "an opinion" of his, and this is true of even the most illustrious fictionists of the world like Tolstoy, Dickens, Balzac, Thackeray and others. But a great writer has to be very cautious and particular about the choice of subject and the limits of his presentation. He illustrates the point from some of his well-known novels published upto the year 1899 when this letter was written ( *Henry James Letters*, Vol.IV 110) . Furthermore, this letter is important because in it James points out that Tolstoy and Balzac, perhaps the two greatest fictionists of the world, often make a mistake in resorting to disorderly and indiscriminate shifting of standpoint or centre in their books. Inevitably, they present a confused heap of material without lending it proper order and clear meaning due to want of commanding centre or constant standpoint. Obviously, they fail to achieve as much as they should or could. James avers:

The promiscuous shiftings of standpoint and centre of Tolstoi and Balzac for instance ( which come, to my eye, from their being not so much big dramatists as big *painters* — as Loti is a painter) , are the inevitable result of the *quantity of presenting* their genius launches them in. With the complexity they pile up they *can* get no clearness without trying again and again for new centres. And they don't *always* get it. However, I don't mean to say they don't get enough. ( 112)

In 1901 James, who had by then established himself as a writer and critic with the publication of several of his fictional masterpieces ( *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Princess of Casamassima*, *The Tragic Muse*, *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Awkward Age* and *The Sacred*

*Fount*) and twelve of the fifteen critical pieces collected in *The House of Fiction*, was rightly approached by the famous critic and editor, Edmund Gosse, to write three thousand words about Leo Tolstoy whom James called "our friend." But the novelist-critic declined the offer by saying that he had read only two or three of his "great novels" and that he had no time to peruse his "later incarnations a list of ten or twelve volumes." This is followed by a remark, which obliquely evinces his disinterest in, and concealed aversion to, the Russian novelist's works. It is painfully surprising that James, the indefatigable reader of fiction, writes to Edmund Gosse: "... I haven't at present *time* to read all or any of his stuff..." ( 189) . This clearly exhibits his dislike of Tolstoy's fiction which does not illustrate his fixed notions of the art of the novel, and this also accentuates his lack of objectivity ( to which he attaches utmost importance) with regard to Tolstoy. Unfortunately, James makes several negative observations about Tolstoy, even though he, as he admits, has not read whole of him.

In a significant letter written to Hugh Walpole in 1912, just four years before his death in 1916, James articulated his staunch belief that form is all-important in a work of art, and hence Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are to be accused of the degradation of art because of their complete, blatant disregard for form. He states that the older he grows the more "do picking and composing" become sacred to him, and that only duffers can say that "strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form is [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it" ( 619) . Stressing the all-importance of form in a creative work, he asserts that it is this alone which "holds and preserves" the subject matter and protects it from "the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding," which is nothing but the degradation of art of which an artist should be ashamed. He debunks Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, despite their great minds and souls, for creating this kind of rather base writing as they neglect the architectural side of art, and cram a work indiscriminately with all kinds of material without caring to impart it a meaningful shape. The core of the letter/ his argument is cited below:

Tolstoi and D. ( Dostoevsky) are fluid pudding, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives in savour and flavour, thanks to the strong, rank quality of their genius and their experience. But there are all sorts of things to be said of them, and in particular that we see how great a vice is their lack of composition, their defiance of economy and architecture, directly they are emulated and imitated, *then*, as subjects of emulation, models, they quite give themselves away. There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a *leak* in its interest; and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form. Its opposite, the *found* ( because the sought-for) form is the absolute citadel and tabernacle of interest. ( 69)

Yet in another letter written to Hugh Walpole the very next year on 21 August 1913, James talks about Tolstoy in almost the same vein. He avers that even a close reading of *War and Peace* has not brought about any change in his opinion about Tolstoy's fiction; its abominable formlessness and looseness cannot and should not place it above downright condemnation. Undoubtedly, he has a wonderful grasp of life, but the presentation of the vast life in utter shapelessness is nothing but a colossal and ugly waste which can be appreciated only by fools, and not by a connoisseur of art. James concludes the letter with these strong, derogatory observations:

He doesn't do to read over, and that exactly is the answer to those who idiotically proclaim the impunity of such formless shape, such flopping looseness and such a denial of composition, selection and style. He has a mighty fund of life, but the *waste* and the ugliness and vice of waste, the vice of a not finer *doing*, are sickening. For me he but makes "composition" throne, by contrast, in effulgent lustre. ( 681)

What I feel is that James does not see eye to eye with Tolstoy; they are poles opposite of each other. The reason is quite apparent after the above discussion: technique involving total presentation and form, based upon careful and tireless selection and rejection of the material, is all-important to James, while all this has never been

of much concern to Tolstoy. Whereas James attaches too much significance to technique and presentation, Tolstoy seems to give only a little consideration to them. This is the reason why James's *The Ambassadors* is perhaps the only book among his later novels in which technique and life are truly blended. When we peruse a novel like *War and Peace*, we find it as long as life itself, and go on reading it as we go on living. Tolstoy's novels are, as George Saintsbury remarks, "pieces of life'... but in a strangely unlicked and unfinished condition. One constantly finds touches, not of talent so much as of genius" ( "Turgenev, Dostoievsky, and Tolstoy," *Russian Literature and Modern English Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays* 27) . Thus, James, despite his bias against Tolstoy, appears to be fair in lamenting Tolstoy's lack of architectural competence and craftsmanship for which he almost adores Tolstoy's fellow Russian writer Turgenev. Apparently, he, who considers the novel essentially a work of art, holds that Tolstoy cannot be a model for other writers, as Turgenev is. James's wrongful rejection of the "large loose baggy monsters" ( "Preface to 'The Tragic Muse,'" *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* 84) like Tolstoy's *War and Peace* can be understood in the light of his firm view about the true nature of life and art, lucidly explained in the following extract from "Preface to 'The Spoils of Poynton'":

Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible. ( 120)

In a word, James regards Tolstoy as "the great illustrative masterhand on all this ground of the disconnection of method from matter" ( "The New Novel, 1914," *Selected Literary Criticism* 368) . Nevertheless, it may also be said in this context that though James has not written as much about Tolstoy as he has written about Turgenev, his criti-

cal observations on him are valuable to understand the essence of his writings because of the quality of James's mind and the insightful seriousness with which he deals with the subject.

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## 3

### “A BORN WRITER”: SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S ESTIMATION OF LEO TOLSTOY THE FICTIONIST

Though enamoured of the illustrious French fictionists like Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, the Goncourts and Anatole France, Somerset Maugham could not escape the all-pervasive impact of the celebrated Russian fiction writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, and referred to, and wrote about, them frequently in his expository writings throughout his long, successful literary career. He felt an irresistible fascination for Russia and Russian language and literature, as he states in his non-fictional work, *The Summing Up*: “Russia was very much in the thoughts of people then and I had a mind to go there for a year, learn the language of which I already knew the rudiments and immerse myself in the emotion and mystery of that vast country. I thought that there perhaps I might find something that would give sustenance and enrichment to my spirit” ( 189-90) . In the same book, a little later he acknowledges the greatness of Russian fictionists and their importance for him as a writer: “But I could not miss the opportunity of spending certainly a considerable time in the country of Tolstoi, Dostoievski and Chekov; I had a notion that in the intervals of the work I was being sent to do I could get something for myself that would be of value...” ( 196) . Then, in his another significant non-fictional book, *A Writer's Notebook*, he stated, as early as 1917, that he, like most of his contemporaries, got deeply interested in Russia because of her fiction writers like Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky whose works articulated an emotion that was strikingly different from any explored and communicated in the novels of other countries. Furthermore, he asserted that their novels completely overshadowed the works of such distinguished and popular British and French fictionists as Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal by exposing their basic weaknesses — viz. artificiality, delineation of mainly

the middle-class world, etc. To quote his own words:

They made the greatest novels of Western Europe look artificial. Their novelty made me unfair to Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope, with their conventional morality; and even the great writers of France, Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert, in comparison seemed formal and a little frigid. The life they portrayed, these English and French novelists, was familiar; and I, like others of my generation, was tired of it. They described a society that was policed. Its thoughts had been thought too often. Its emotions, even when extravagant, were extravagant within ordered limits. It was fiction fit for a middle-class civilization, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and its readers were resolute to bear in mind that all they read was make-believe. ( *A Writer's Notebook* 139)

Also, in this very book in 1941 Maugham proclaimed Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Balzac and Dickens to be “the four greatest novelists the world has ever known” ( 305) .

As Maugham was a very popular creative writer of his time with a number of best sellers — *Of Human Bondage*, *The Razor's Edge*, *Cake and Ale* and hundreds of short stories and several dramas — to his credit, so when he was in the United States in early 1950s, the Editor of *Redbook* asked him to prepare the list of the ten best novels in the world which he did and sometime later an American publisher approached him to write an introduction to each of the ten best novels chosen by him, and importantly he included in this list two masterpieces of Russian fiction — Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and F. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Obviously, this evidences his belief in the sterling, resplendent merits of the two eminent Russian fictional geniuses, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. His perceptive observations on, and estimation of, perhaps the most outstanding novel till to-day — *War and Peace* — are contained in his varied expository writings, especially in the volume, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, which first appeared in 1954 under the title *Ten Novels and Their Authors*. Owing to paucity of space in this paper, I shall concentrate only on his statements about Tolstoy and his works.

Maugham affirms repeatedly that Tolstoy was “a born writer, and it was his instinct to put matters in the most effective, dramatic and interesting way he could” ( “Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace*,” *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45) . Thus, while speaking of the nature and essential elements of the novel, he refers to Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. He points out that the novel is a narrative of certain length, and can be as long as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* — a voluminous work, indeed — “in which a succession of events is related and a vast number of characters are displayed through a period of time, or as short as *Carmen*” ( “Ten Novels and Their Authors — The Art of Fiction,” *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 17-8) .

One of the fanatical admirers of Marcel Proust, whose monumental work, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Maugham regards as the greatest novel produced in the twentieth century, and he attributes its greatness to the novelist's power to create original, variegated and lifelike characters, and in this respect he is equal to Dickens, Balzac and Tolstoy ( 7) . Thus, Tolstoy, according to Maugham, is the touchstone to define the novel and to evaluate the worth of the works of even the greatest writers of the world. Obliquely, here he accentuates the Russian's innate capability of portraying a world inhabited by living and realistic people which is one of the most important criteria of a lasting work of literature. Also, he underlines “the scope and the broad humanity of Tolstoy” ( *A Writer's Notebook* 162) .

Maugham enumerates some of the essential qualities of a good novel. One of these is that it must explore and communicate a theme of wide interest by which he means that a great novel deals with a subject which has immense appeal not only to a clique of persons but to general men and women of all countries and times. He affirms: “... the theme should be of enduring interest: the novelist is rash who elects to write on subjects whose interest is merely topical. When they cease to be so, his novel will be as unreadable as last week's newspaper” ( *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 15) . The author should concentrate on topics of great concern to most of the human beings — viz. life's meaning

and value, soul's immortality, God's existence, war, etc. And the subject he focuses on must be an integral part of the story he narrates and of the persons he portrays — their actions emanating from it and it developing them. Maugham has great admiration for Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* because they are concerned with matters/ topics of everlasting universal appeal such as the meaning and significance of life, war, peace, etc. His unreserved praise for Tolstoy's masterpiece is justified, for ever since the inception of life in the universe, nothing has been as perennial and haunting as war and the efforts and desire to seek peace. Patently, *War and Peace*, despite its treatment of the temporal and historic event of Napoleonic wars and the graphic portrayal of the social and political milieu of that period in all details, will never lose its interest for mankind because of its preoccupation with the basic, eternal theme of war and peace.

Maugham comprehends correctly the different attitudes of the fictionists of varied Western nationalities like the French, the English, the Russian and others. Though himself a British, he could appreciate the classical sense and the orderly minds of the French that produced well-shaped works with themes properly developed and other things well-organized. At the same time he could perceive the value and validity of English and Russian novels lacking in precision and good form. Thus, his unbiased, right understanding of art enables him to see and pinpoint greatness in a rather shapeless, large narrative like *War and Peace*, for the life we know, in the words of Maugham, is like this “with its arbitrariness and inconsequence” ( “The Complete Short Stories, Volume I,” *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 60) . It certainly goes to his credit that despite affinity with the French masters and predilection for the arts “on the side of law and order” ( 60) , he, unlike another master fictionist of this kind, Henry James whose notorious denunciation of *War and Peace* as a “large loose baggy monster” is well-known, highlights the immense worth of the works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and others. He is fully aware that the unmistakable dramatic value and tightness of effect have their own disadvantages, for “life does not dovetail into its various parts with such



neatness" ( 60) . Little wonder a great artist usually does not meticulously arrange life to suit his purposes, and does not distort facts to his advantage and to his plan because this inevitably makes his picture of life artificial and unconvincing. Tolstoy is outstanding because in his major works he paints a picture of life, of human nature and sets it before us, without bothering whether we acquiesce it or not.

Maugham, though not enthusiastic about new experiments with themes and technique of fiction, admits with admiration the Russians' contribution to the widening of the scope of the novel. They could make the novel an artistic exposition of the economic, political and social ideas and problems of their age. Thus, they "brought something new to fiction, but by the circumstances of their civilization they were inclined to subordinate art to social questions" ( "*Traveler's Library* — 'General Introduction,' *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 82) . Maugham holds that notwithstanding his concern for his milieu, a novelist can create great fiction only when he focuses on a subject pertaining to "the common vicissitudes of humanity, birth and death, love and hatred, youth and old age," for these, indeed, are the subjects of great fiction ( 83) . Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov are distinguished fictionists because their works concentrate on the subjects of permanent and timeless value, the common aspects of humanity.

As most of the fictionists write both novels and short stories, Maugham, himself an outstanding fictionist, gives due consideration to the contribution made by the Russian fictionists, including Tolstoy and Chekhov, to the growth and new dimensions of the short story. In his opinion, the Russians gave a new vigour and life to the short story which had become tediously mechanical and unattractive to the reader in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the popular and great stories written by Maupassant in France, Rudyard Kipling in England and Bret Harte in America. The three celebrated Russians — viz. Tolstoy, Chekhov and Turgenev — imparted new life to an exhausted form; they "to a large extent transformed the composition and the appreciation of short stories" ( "*Teller of Tales* — 'Introduction,' *Selected Prefaces and*

*Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 98) . The Russians wrote stories of quite another type and undoubtedly "made of the short story something new and vital" ( 97) . Commenting on Tolstoy's achievement as short story writer, Maugham asserts:

... the inventor of the Russian story as we know it was Tolstoy. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, ... there is a great deal more than the germ of all the Russian stories that have been written since. It comprehends all the merits and all the defects of the Russian story. ( 97-8)

Maugham attaches a lot of importance to fiction dealing with the culture of the world — fiction which every well-bred man would like to read —, but he laments the lack of this kind of fiction, which makes a man spiritually richer. The books by two Russian novelists that Maugham puts in this category include Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The eminent Russians give the reader "that thrill, that rapture, that fruitful energy which great art can produce" ( 103-04) . According to Maugham, Tolstoy is, indeed, simply marvellous because he, like Balzac, impresses the reader with "the power and fullness of his personality" ( 104) . What is striking about his fiction, along with the writings of some of his distinguished contemporaries, is that he shows how "the conditions of existence have affected their attitude towards the elemental things of life and love and death which are the essential materials not only of poetry but of fiction" ( 117) . Maugham holds that variety may not be a merit in a poet, but "it surely is in a writer of fiction" ( "*A Choice of Kipling's Prose* — 'Introduction,' *Selected Prefaces and Introductions of W. Somerset Maugham* 126) , and this we find unequivocally in Tolstoy the fictionist. Like a good writer of fiction, he has the peculiarity, more pronounced in him than in any other man, and has not only one self, but "several, often discordant aspects of his personality" ( 126) .

Tolstoy wrote the greatest novel of the world at the age of thirty six, "an age at which an author's creative gift," in Maugham's view, "is generally at its height" ( "*Leo Tolstoy and War and Peace*," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 25) , and the apparent subject of it was Napoleonic wars, the climax of which was Napoleon's invasion of

Russia and the burning of Moscow resulting in the retreat and destruction of his armies. He initially intended to present in *War and Peace* a family saga, a story of a family of the gentry, and the historical events related to Napoleonic wars were to form only a background. But during the course of writing it, he changed his stance and made its canvas larger and deeper by imparting more and more importance to “the titanic struggle between the opposing powers” and by investing it with “a philosophy of history” based on his extensive reading ( 26) . His philosophy of history sets forth his belief that the common view that history is shaped and directed by great men is erroneous; instead, it is affected by “an obscure force” that runs through the people and leads them unknowingly to triumph or failure. Thus to Tolstoy, to quote the words of Maugham,

Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon were no more than figureheads, symbols as it were, who were carried on by a momentum they could neither resist nor control. It was not by his strategy nor his big battalions that Napoleon won his battles, for his orders were not obeyed, either because the situation had changed or they were not delivered in time, but because the enemy was seized with a conviction that the battle was lost and so abandoned the field. For Tolstoy the hero of the invasion of Russia was the Commander-in-Chief, Kutuzov, because he did nothing, avoided battle and merely waited for the French armies to destroy themselves. ( 28)

This unique view of history undoubtedly evinces the author's insightful grasp of reality and lends the temporal and spatial events — the Napoleonic wars — a universal touch and a rare depth. But due to his quest and portrayal of historical facts, he mars, to a great extent, the artistic value of the book, and that is why Maugham opines that Tolstoy's writing so many chapters about the factual retreat of Napoleon from Moscow just to illustrate his idea of history “may be good history, but it is not good fiction” ( 28) because it is an expanded digression that hampers the emotional continuity of the narrative and damages its thematic and formal unity. Undoubtedly, these long digressive chapters towards the end of this bulky book are uninteresting and fatiguing, and spoil the aesthetic side of

it, but Tolstoy amply makes up for it in the epilogue which is a piece of brilliant invention. Most of the novelists before him would tell the reader what happened to the principal characters after the story was over, but they would do so “perfunctorily, in a page or two, and the reader was left with the impression that it was a sop the author had somewhat contemptuously thrown him” ( 29) . It was Tolstoy who first made his epilogue really significant and functional. Thus, in the epilogue we are taken after seven years to the world of main characters. We are told how Nicholas Rostov has married a rich lady and has children, Pierre and Natasha visit them, Natasha is married and has two children, etc. Further, we are informed that their all high hopes have evaporated and they lead a commonplace, dull and complacent life in their middle age after bearing a lot of suffering and hazards. The apparently happy ending is intensely tragic in that the great transformation which has taken place in their lives is highly moving, but it looks convincing and true to life, thus making the ending artistically brilliant and fascinating. A small part of Maugham's analysis of it is worth citing here:

Natasha who was so sweet, so unpredictable, so delightful, is now a fussy housewife. Nicholas Rostov, once so gallant and high spirited, is now a self-opinionated country squire; and Pierre is fatter than ever, good-natured still, but no wiser than he was before. The happy ending is deeply tragic. Tolstoy did not write thus, I think, in bitterness, but because he knew that this is what it would all come to; and he had to tell the truth. ( 29)

Notwithstanding his kinship with the French fictionists, Maugham avers that the looseness of form that we clearly perceive in *War and Peace* does not detract from its merit because it enables the writer to resort to digression in order to write about any topic of his choice ( though not directly related to the basic theme) which is usually entertaining to the reader and is relevant to the author's age. Apropos of this, Maugham writes:

The author is human, and he has his fads and fancies; the looseness of the form, especially as the novel is written in England and Russia, gives him the opportunity to dilate on

any subject dear to his heart, and seldom has the strength of mind or the critical sense to realize that, however interesting it may be to him, unless it is necessary to the working out of his novel it has no place in it. It is besides almost inevitable that the novelist should be susceptible to the fashions of his day, since after all he has an unusual affectibility, and so he is often led to write what, as the fashion passes, loses its attractiveness. ( "The Ten Best Novels of the World," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 18)

Maugham attributes the greatness of *War and Peace*, to a large degree, to Tolstoy's masterly skill in character-creation. His wonderful fecundity is evident from the fact that this book is crowded with as many as five hundred characters who are "sharply individualized and clearly presented" ( 26) without the least tinge of repetition and tediousness, and this is certainly a rare achievement. Furthermore, what is remarkable about his art of character-portrayal is that unlike most of the novelists like Dickens, Fielding and Thackeray who have written bulky novels, he has not concentrated only on two or three persons or on a single group but almost on all the important members of four aristocratic families — viz. the Rostoyas, the Bolkonskis, the Kuragins and the Bezukhovs. And it is, indeed, very difficult for a writer to handle a situation when he has to deal with a fairly good number of characters, belonging to different groups or types, in consonance with the requirement of the theme he intends to explore and communicate because he has to make his shifting from one group to another plausible to the reader, who, while reading about one set of persons for the time being, gets inquisitive to know what is going on with others about whom he has not been told anything for some time. This is certainly a difficult test for the writer, but Tolstoy gets through it most impressively. Highlighting this aspect of his genius, Maugham avers: "On the whole Tolstoy has managed to do this so skilfully that you seem to be following a single thread of narration" ( 26) .

No doubt, Tolstoy based his characters, like most of the writers of fiction, on the real people he chanced to know in his life, but his men and women are much more than their originals, and not the

mere replicas of their models. In fact, "by the time his imagination had worked upon them they had become creatures of his own invention" ( 26) . This is true of all the notable characters in *War and Peace*. Thus, the thriftless Count has his germs in Tolstoy's grandfather, Nicholas Rostov in his father, and Princess Mary in his mother. The two main male characters in the novel, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrew, are the projections of the author himself, and Maugham believes that he did so in order to comprehend his real self in its totality. To quote his own words: "... it is perhaps not fantastic to suggest that, conscious of his own divided personality, in thus creating two contrasted individuals on the one model of himself he sought to clarify and understand his own character" ( 26) . Pierre and Prince Andrew are poles apart from each other, but are alike in that they, like Tolstoy, are obsessed with the mysteries of life and death but miserably fail in their quest. Their dissimilarities are well-marked. Prince Andrew is romantic, proud of his class and position, and noble-minded, but suffers from weaknesses like haughtiness, dictatorial attitudes, irrationality and intolerance. Obviously, he is a mixture of virtues and vices and hence very engaging and true to life. Strikingly different from him in appeal, Pierre is gentle, sweet-natured, generous, modest and self-sacrificing, but, in Maugham's view, "so weak, so irresolute, so easily hoodwinked, so gullible that you cannot help feeling impatient with him. His desire to do good, and be good, is touching, but was it necessary to make him such a fool" ( 27) ? Clearly, Maugham is of the opinion that Tolstoy does not succeed fully in his delineation, though many scholars, including me, may differ from him because a great writer as Tolstoy is, he portrays different types of persons having different kinds of appeal for different readers. But Maugham is correct in his judgement that Tolstoy writes "some very, very dull chapters" ( 27) to depict how Pierre becomes a Freemason to look for an answer to the tormenting riddles pertaining to life and death.

Maugham feels that Natasha, who is Count Rostov's younger daughter and who is loved by both Pierre and Prince Andrew, is the most delightful, arresting figure invented by Tolstoy and she surely contributes much to the exquisiteness of the book. This is the nov-

elist's unique artistic triumph, for, as Maugham asserts, "Nothing is so difficult as to portray a young girl who is at once charming and interesting" ( 27) . Maugham rightly points out that usually the young girls in fiction are colourless like Amelia in *Vanity Fair*, priggish like Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, very clever like Constantia Durham in *The Egoist*, little geese like Dora in *David Copperfield*, stupid flirts and unbelievably innocent. They are awkward subjects for the writer to deal with because at that tender age the personality of a person does not develop fully, and hence the writer can only portray the charm and beauty of their youth. But Tolstoy does much more than this in the case of youthful Natasha and therein lies his command of the art of character delineation; he paints her wholly natural, "sweet, sensitive and sympathetic, wilful, childish, already womanly idealistic, quick-tempered, warm-hearted, headstrong, capricious and in everything enchanting" ( 27) . Thus, though the great Russian has created many lifelike women in his writings, yet "never another who wins the affection of the reader as does Natasha" ( 27) .

However, notwithstanding Tolstoy's marvellous art of characterisation, elaborated above, his *magnum opus* does suffer, according to Maugham, from the author's lack of interest in his characters due to the failure in his vigour and enthusiasm towards the close of the book. This is evident in Tolstoy's indulgence in describing, in detail, Pierre's adventure into Freemasonry which makes the narrative tedious and almost unreadable. But then Maugham offers a plausible reason of it which is difficult to set aside; he asserts that it is but natural in the case of a work which is very voluminous and is completed in more than six years after seven revisions: "In so long a book as *War and Peace*, and one that took so long to write, it is inevitable that the author's verve should sometimes fail him" ( 278) .

In addition to powerful imagination and keen observation, what makes Tolstoy's books so fascinating is his ability to put himself in the shoes of the characters of his invention. In spite of his strong, idiosyncratic personality, he indubitably possesses the rare Shakespearean Protean quality; the extrovert in him most of the time overshadows the introvert. Natasha, Pierre, Prince Andrew, Nicholas

Rostov, Anna Karenina and others bear witness to it. He can clearly be seen rejoicing in their joys, and suffering with them in their sorrows, and thus becoming one with them. Also, Tolstoy is simply outstanding because of his amazing inventiveness transcending imitation, for, Maugham believes, "Great writers create; writers of smaller gifts copy" ( *A Writer's Notebook* 147) .

True, much of Tolstoy's greatness as a creative writer, like many others, rests on the fact that he artistically records in his works the sublimation of his repressed instincts and daydreams. This undoubtedly leads him to indulge in the adoration of man of action. In the eminent Russian's creative writings, particularly in his monumental work, *War and Peace*, this patent feature of the great genius is explicit in the delineation of major characters and their thoughts and actions. Pierre, Natasha, Prince Andrew and others exemplify it. Tolstoy's repressed, unfulfilled sex desires, spiritual quests, renunciation of the world, etc. find an eloquent articulation in his unique book. Apropos of this generalisation about great artists, Maugham observes:

Every creative writer's work is, to some extent at least, a sublimation of instincts, desires, daydreams, call them what you like, which for one cause or another he has repressed, and by giving them literary expression he is freed of the compulsion to give them the further release of action. But it is not a complete satisfaction. He is left with a feeling of inadequacy. That is the ground of the man of letters, glorification of the man of action and the unwilling, envious admiration with which he regards him. ( "Leo Tolstoy and *War and Peace*," *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 45)

Besides, Tolstoy's works have "the intimacy, the broad human touch and the animal serenity which the greatest writers alone can give" ( *The Summing Up* 77) .

Somerset Maugham makes a perceptive observation about *Anna Karenina*, which was written in 1870s, years after *War and Peace* had gained popularity, and which is considered by many greater than a work of art because it is, in Matthew Arnold's opinion, "a piece of life. A piece of life it is" ( *Essays in Criticism*, Second

Series 152) . Maugham first read it while he was just a boy and so he remembered it only vaguely when he got interested in it and re-read it as a practising fictionist interested in the art of fiction. On his perusal of it from a professional point of view around the year 1917, he found it “powerful and strange, but a little hard and dry” ( *A Writer's Notebook* 143) . While Matthew Arnold, much before him, was deeply impressed by its realistic presentation of life and usually it has been lauded wholeheartedly by most of the people for its insightful thematic treatment and formal beauty, Maugham holds a different view; he finds it powerful and uniquely original in its delineation of life, but “hard and dry” and hence, by implication, much inferior to *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky and the notable books by Turgenev.

Perhaps Maugham has never been as precise, pointed and incisive in his critical comments as in those related to Tolstoy's last full-length novel, *Resurrection*, completed in 1889. Maugham begins his criticism of it on a negative note; he avers that this book owes its reputation to its author's established fame, for the moral intention eclipses the artistic side, reducing it to a moral tract. About this, he makes an entry in *A Writer's Notebook* in 1917: “The moral purpose has obscured the art, and it is a tract rather than a novel. The scenes in prison, the account of the convicts' journey to Siberia, give the unfortunate impression of having been mugged up for the occasion...” ( 160) . But then Maugham states that as Tolstoy was endowed with extraordinary gifts of an artist, so even this weak book due to its moral propaganda is conspicuous for some rare artistic virtues: it is studded with realistic and poetic effects of nature, “the scents of the country night, the heat of midday and the mystery of dawn” ( 160) . In addition, the novel is remarkable for its art of characterisation, and Achludof is Tolstoy's wonderful creation whose sensuality, mysticism, sentimentality, ineffectiveness, timidity, obstinacy and muddleheadedness make him “a type in which most Russians can recognise themselves” ( 160) . But what is especially remarkable about this novel from the technical point of view, in Maugham's opinion which is sound and incontestable, is the wonderful portrayal of minor characters, several of whom are painted

lifelike with distinct individuality in just a few lines on a single page and in this regard Tolstoy surpasses even Shakespeare, the peerless master of the art of characterisation. Maugham accentuates this astonishing artistic strength of Tolstoy as displayed in *Resurrection* thus:

... the most remarkable thing about the book is the immense gallery of subordinate characters, some of whom appear but on a single page, who are drawn, often in three or four lines, with a distinctness and individuality which any writer must find amazing. Most of the small characters in Shakespeare's plays are not characterised at all: they are merely names with a certain number of lines to say, and actors, who have often an accurate instinct in this matter, will tell you how great an effort it requires to put individuality into such puppets; but Tolstoy gives each man his own life and character. An ingenious commentator might devise the past and suggest the future of the most summarily sketched. ( 160)

In fact, Tolstoy's creative fertility is prodigious, his subject matter is the whole life of his time and the contemporary civilisation, his knowledge of men and women is vast and realistic, he knows the aristocracy thoroughly and immaculately, he is able to paint the wicked realistically, his observation is precise and pointed, and his invention is stupendous as exhibited by the extraordinarily large number of characters marked by individual traits showing the ‘God's plenty’ in his fictional world. However, Maugham does not fail to mark that Tolstoy, like Dostoevsky, writes “Russian very indifferently” and ill ( *The World's Ten Greatest Novels* 66) . Though a distinguished writer should write “well than badly” ( 67) , but much more important than this are some other qualities which are the hallmark of a genius like that of Tolstoy or Balzac and these qualities are “vigor and vitality, imagination, creative force, observation, knowledge of human nature, with an interest in it and sympathy with it, fertility and intelligence...” ( 67) . These merits also make up for the two factors because of which no novel is said to be perfect — “the natural inadequacy of the form” and “the deficiencies of the human being who writes it” ( 117) . Besides the qualities, mentioned above,

what makes the writer to produce a great work of art is the creative instinct combined with personality — the author's idiosyncrasy which, in Maugham's view, "enables him to see in a manner peculiar to himself. It may be a pleasant or an unpleasant personality. That does not matter.... The only thing that matters is that he should see with his own eyes, and that his eyes should show him a world peculiar to himself" ( 233-34) . In a word, an outstanding novelist invariably portrays an idiosyncratic interpretation of life, of world, and for this much education is not needed — Tolstoy and Flaubert were not highly educated and yet both were popular and eminent writers. Since Tolstoy's works embody his personal, idiosyncratic and peculiar view of life very effectively and artistically, he is such a great writer.

In the opening chapter of his famous book, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, Maugham affirms that no one should look for perfection in a novel because even the best cannot be free from some blemishes, but a novel that occupies a place among the world's greatest of all times should possess certain qualities which he enumerates as follows:

It should have a widely interesting theme, by which I mean a theme interesting not only to a clique, whether of critics, professors, highbrows, truck drivers or dish washers, but so broadly human that it is interesting to men and women of all sorts.... The story should be coherent and persuasive; it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the end should be the natural consequence of the beginning. The episodes should have probability and should not only develop the theme, but grow out of the story. The creatures of the novelist's invention should be observed with individuality, and their actions should proceed from their characters; the reader must never be allowed to say: So and so would never behave like that; on the contrary he should be obliged to say: That's exactly how I should have expected So and so to behave. I think it is all the better if the characters are in themselves interesting. ( 15-6)

Besides highlighting the four essential qualities of a great novel as explained lucidly in the above extract, on the next page of the same book Maugham elucidates four more requisites of an outstanding

fictional work in these words:

The dialogue should neither be desultory nor should it be an occasion for the author to air his opinions; it should serve to characterize the speakers and to advance the story. The narrative passages should be vivid, to the point and no longer than is necessary to make the motives of the persons concerned and the situations in which they are placed clear and convincing. The writing should be simple enough for anyone of ordinary education to read it with ease, and the manner should fit the matter as a well-cut shoe fits a shapely foot. Finally a novel should be entertaining. I have put this last, but it is the essential quality, without which no other quality is of any use. No one in his senses reads a novel for instruction or edification. If he wants instruction or edification he is a fool if he does not go to the books written to instruct and edify.

( 7)

Then in the "Postscript" on the last page of this very book from which the above two extracts have been cited, Maugham holds that an extraordinary work of art ought to be simply absorbing and more than a temporary, fleeting refreshment by contributing to the soul's self-attainment — its permanent realisation of at least some basic eternal values. Apropos of this, he writes:

"Human beings require something which absorbs them for a time, something out of the routine which they can stare at. Great art is more than a transient refreshment. It is something which adds to the soul's self-attainment. It justifies itself both by its immediate enjoyment, and also by its discipline of the inmost being. Its discipline is not distinct from enjoyment, but by reason of it. It transforms the soul into the permanent realization of values extending beyond its former self." ( 240) .

The reason why Somerset Maugham considers Tolstoy a very great novelist and his *War and Peace* the best novel of the world so far is that he finds almost all the above-mentioned essential qualities of a great novel in this book which is amply clear from the foregoing discussion of Tolstoy's mind and art and his major works. He particularly underlines its vast thematic appeal, the epical pres-

entation of life encompassing the whole human world characterised by perennial struggles, aspirations, ambitions, quests of all kinds, joys and sorrows and what not. Pinpointing the sterling merits of this greatest fictional work till now, Maugham passes his final, irrefutable verdict on it rationally and conclusively thus:

I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No novel with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was ever written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. Strakhov, a friend of Tolstoy's and an able critic, put his opinion into a few energetic sentences: "A complete picture of human life. A complete picture of the Russia of that day. A complete picture of what may be called the history and struggle of peoples. A complete picture of everything in which people find their happiness and greatness, their grief and humiliation. That is *War and Peace*." ( 25)

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## 4

### "NO ENGLISH NOVELIST IS AS GREAT AS TOLSTOY": E.M. FORSTER'S LAUDATORY ASSESSMENT OF TOLSTOY'S MIND AND ART

E.M. Forster, whose luminous literary career spread over a long period of more than half a century — all through the momentous first half of the twentieth century —, distinguished himself as fictionist, fiction critic, reviewer, journalist, radio broadcaster, humanist and administrator. An intellectual aristocrat, he was a prominent member of the famous Bloomsbury group of artists, consisting of celebrated persons like Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry and T.S. Eliot. However, he was primarily concerned, rather obsessed, with fiction in English, and read it voraciously and thought about it very seriously, the evidence of which is the fact that he was invited to deliver the Clark lectures on fiction at Cambridge in the spring of nineteen twenty-seven, later published in book form as *Aspects of the Novel* which has run in many editions till today. No wonder he perused Tolstoy's fictional writings, and made numerous incisive comments on them. His observations on the great Russian's mind and art are interspersed all over his essays, radio talks, lectures and interviews which are contained in his well-known books, *Aspects of the Novel*, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, *Abinger Harvest*, etc. In the present essay I have attempted to collect, collate, systematise and critically examine them in order to bring out his assessment of Tolstoy's art and ideas in particular, and the art of fiction in general, demonstrating the Russian's greatness as fiction writer.

Strikingly different from Percy Lubbock, the author of *Craft of Fiction* in which he lays immense stress on form in the novel illustrating from Henry James's novels and thus highlighting their value, E.M. Forster holds that it is the portrayal of life in abundance and the delineation of characters having real life models that impart lasting

significance to a work of fiction. During the discussion of the art of fiction with Paris Review interviewers in the nineteen fifties, Forster remarks that much of Tolstoy's greatness as fictionist is due to his wonderful capability of perceiving life in its breadth and depth and delineating it truthfully and objectively in his creative works, and that only a few writers can emulate him in this respect. He says: "We have not the power of observing the variety of life and describing it dispassionately. There are a few who have done this. Tolstoy was one, wasn't he" ( *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 31) ? Indeed, Forster holds Tolstoy's fiction in such a high esteem mainly because it is soaked in human life, and for him the novel cannot be alienated from its ingrained human quality and if it is done, the novel will be left with almost nothing:

The intensely, stiflingly human quality of the novel is not to be avoided; the novel is sogged with humanity; there is no escaping the uplift or the downpour, nor can they be kept out of criticism. We may hate humanity, but if it is exorcised or even purified the novel wilts, little is left but a bunch of words. ( *Aspects of the Novel* 31)

Accordingly, Forster repeatedly points to Tolstoy's astonishing power of presenting a vast panorama of life in *War and Peace* which makes the book 'warm-hearted', 'heroic' and 'great' ( "Our Second Greatest Novel?" *Two Cheers for Democracy* 227) .

Decades before Somerset Maugham's considered pronouncement in mid nineteen fifties that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel of the world, E.M. Forster as early as 1927 unequivocally declared Tolstoy to be a master novelist, greater than any British fictionist, and the reason he advanced for his assertion was that the inimitable Russian could paint a very comprehensive picture of human life, inclusive of the private as well as the public life, which is almost impossible for any other writer to emulate. To quote Forster's own words: "No English novelist is as great as Tolstoy — that is to say, has given so complete a picture of man's life, both on its domestic and heroic side" ( *Aspects of the Novel* 15) . In fact, the vastness of *War and Peace* is simply overwhelming and even some of the very popular and outstanding English novels look very

small in comparison with it. Forster elucidates the point by referring to four British fictional works — Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford*, Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and George Meredith's *Richard Feverel*. He spotlights the merits of these books: the radiant humour of the urban midlands in *Cranford*, the brilliant portrayal of Edinburgh in *The Heart of Midlothian*, the passionate dream of a fine but undeveloped woman in *Jane Eyre*, and the exquisite farmhouse lyricism and flickers of wit permeating *Richard Feverel*. But these four books with their extraordinary traits, according to Forster, are just small structures beside the stupendous, awe-inspiring edifice of *War and Peace*. Apropos of this, he writes: "But all four are little mansions, not mighty edifices, and we shall see and respect them for what they are if we stand them for an instant in the colonnades of *War and Peace*..." ( 16) .

Forster asserts that every novel inescapably presents the life in time, for without this it will have little sense as in the case of Gertrude Stein's fiction, although the traditional delineation of the life in time may be somewhat base and inferior. But a great novelist like Tolstoy is concerned with much more than the life in time; he goes beyond even the life by values and takes into his compass space in its vastness. Undoubtedly, in *War and Peace* Tolstoy celebrates the life in time instinctively very much like Arnold Bennett in *The Old Wives' Tale*, but while in the latter book time is the real hero and this makes it miss greatness despite its sincerity and sadness, the Russian novel is doubtless great even in its emphatic portrayal of the effects of time through the effects of the waxing and waning of people. Though Tolstoy shows people like Nicholas and Natasha getting old and decayed like Arnold Bennett's Constance and Sophia and we feel like losing our own youth, yet *War and Peace*, as Forster rightly avers, is not depressing like *The Old Wives' Tale*. The reason is that "it has extended over space as well as over time, and the sense of space until it terrifies us is exhilarating , and leaves behind it an effect like music" ( 46) .

Forster rightly points out that Tolstoy is as much interested in the story element — in what comes next — as Sir Walter Scott, and is as sincere about it as Arnold Bennett. No doubt, he is master of



the art of story telling, concoctation of episodes and character delineation, but what is most striking about his fictional art is his unparalleled sense of space and it is the fact of space being the ruler of *War and Peace* that makes this masterpiece of his the greatest work of fictional art. This is the reason why after reading this novel, one feels the sound of great chords, and this emanates from his unique sense of space, and not time, from, to quote Forster's words, "the immense area of Russia over which episodes and characters have been scattered, from the sum total of bridges and frozen rivers, forests, roads, gardens, fields, which accumulate grandeur and sonority after we have passed them" ( 46) . True, he is not the only novelist endowed with the remarkable feeling for place; there are many who possess it — namely, Arnold Bennett, Auld Reckie and William Faulkner, to mention a few. But certainly few have Tolstoy-like rare sense of space and this ranks so high in his 'divine equipment' that Forster rightly asserts: "Space is the lord of *War and Peace*, not time" ( 47) .

Tolstoy's art of character-delineation elicits Forster's unreserved commendation. The Russian, unlike most of the fictionists of the world, does not pretend that he does not use real people in his books. The fact is that he, in comparison with other writers, does not usually model his characters after the people he has chanced to know closely in life, though, of course, he has also the originals of some of his characters in the real world of his time. But none of his fictional characters is exactly like his original, for an outstanding novelist like him follows a certain process of turning a real man into a fictional one. Consequently, the characters in his fiction could have only a certain degree of reality and this degree of reality differs from character to character.<sup>2</sup> This can easily be illustrated from his portrayal of such major characters in *War and Peace* as the thriftless Count, Nicholas Rostov, Prince Mary, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrew who have their germs in his own self, his grandfather, father, mother and persons closely related to him.

What appeals to Forster as well as to most of the serious readers is Tolstoy's ability to make his people real in spite of their complex natures and split personalities fraught with opposite traits.

He delights in presenting men and women as bundles of contradictions, but the contrary qualities in them are very close to life. To quote Forster's own words: "Tolstoy is conscientious over his characters, he has a personal responsibility to each of them, he has a vital conception of them, and though they are full of contradictions, those contradictions are true to life" ( "Julius Caesar," *Two Cheers for Democracy* 162) . In fact, their contradictory traits make them living and convincing, and they become more real when they contradict themselves. Thus, they are living human beings, and not masked skeletons. This feature of a writer's art of characterization is so important to Forster that he does not hesitate to affirm that Tolstoy is, in a way, superior to Shakespeare, for the latter, like the former, is not always necessarily particular and painstaking in making his people lifelike, though he is universally considered as the supreme master of the art of creating real people. Forster dares say it and it is hard to disagree with him:

Contrast Casca with Dolohov in *War and Peace*. Shakespeare often doesn't mind about his people. And when I am reading him one of my difficulties is to detect when he does mind and when he doesn't. This may be heresy on my part, but it seems to me that a great deal of Shakespearean criticism is invalid because it assumes that his characters are real people, and are never put in just to make the play go. ( 162)

However, immediately after this assertion, he points out that Shakespeare, being a great, natural genius, does bother about making his main characters true to life, and it is surely delightful when he or Tolstoy creates real men and women.

Forster points out another remarkable feature of Tolstoy's mastery of the art of character delineation — viz. the immortality of his characters. To Forster, the immortal characters created by great novelists live two lives: life in the book and life eternal. There are many fictional characters who are real in the pages of the book and are liked by the reader, but they do not remain with the reader for ever and are not remembered after the book has been closed. On the other hand, great characters are not only convincing in the novel but also linger on in the memory of the reader. Forster illustrates it

by stating that Virginia Woolf's characters, with the possible exceptions of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Rachel and Clarissa Dalloway, are not among the immortal characters like the memorable creations of Tolstoy and Jane Austen. What is striking is the fact that he finds fault with Virginia Woolf with whom he cherished lifelong intimate relationship, and highlights Tolstoy's greatness by comparing the latter's unforgettable creations with those of the former, thus evincing his rare critical objectivity. After a long, convincing discussion, he concludes that while most of Virginia Woolf's characters live only in the books, Tolstoy's men and women live continuously and have a perennial life. It is pertinent here to cite a part of his observations in this context:

I feel that they do live, but not continuously, whereas the characters of Tolstoy ( let us say) live continuously. With her, the reader is in a state of constant approval. 'Yes, that is right,' he says, each time she implies something more about Jacob or Peter: 'yes, that would be so: yes.' Whereas in the case of Tolstoy approval is absent. We sink into Andre, into Nicolay Rostoff during the moments they come forth, and no more endorse the correctness of their functioning than we endorse our own. And the problem before her — the problem that she has set herself, and that certainly would inaugurate a new literature if solved — is to retain her own wonderful new method and form, and yet allow her readers to inhabit each character with Victorian thoroughness. Think how difficult this is. If you work in a storm of atoms and seconds, if your highest joy is 'life; London; this moment in June' and your deepest mystery 'here is one room; there another,' then how can you construct your human beings so that each shall be not a movable monument but an abiding home, how can you build between them any permanent roads of love and hate? There was continuous life in the little hotel people of *The Voyage Out* because there was no innovation in the method. But Jacob in *Jacob's Room* is discontinuous, demanding — and obtaining — separate approval for everything he feels or does. And *Mrs Dalloway*? There seems a slight change here, an ap-

proach towards character-construction in the Tolstoyan sense; Sir William Bradshaw, for instance, is uninterruptedly and embracingly evil. ( "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," *Abinger Harvest* 127-28)

Forster further elucidates his point by drawing a comparison between Tolstoy's portrait of a young girl in Natasha Rostov in *War and Peace* and Jane Austen's Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* with regard to their dancing scenes. A young girl is naturally absorbed in dancing, but while Natasha is simply wonderful in that she, being young, dances and dances ceaselessly with pure rapture without bothering the least about anything else, Jane Austen's Lydia Bennet dances joyously but her eyes are all the time observant to catch the sight of some suitable man to marry. While the former is immersed in dancing completely detached from everything else but dance, the latter dances with all gusto and gaiety but with a specific purpose which does not leave her even for a moment. Lydia, as Forster justly points out, "has none of the disinterested rapture which fills... Natasha Rostov in the far-distant universe of *War and Peace*, dancing the polonaise, dancing, dancing, because she is young" ( "Jane Austen," *Abinger Harvest* 174) . Inevitably, Lydia is a shadowy, unacceptable figure in comparison with Natasha who is universally acceptable and true to life as a young girl.

Forster extols Tolstoy for creating genuine round characters because he is of the view that round characters are greater achievements than flat characters. One great drawback with a flat character is that he cannot be serious or tragic without being a bore. That is to say, a flat character can be best drawn only when he is comic. But this is not the case with a round character, who can be effectively portrayed as a tragic figure consistently for any length of time. He greatly commends Tolstoy and Jane Austen for creating characters who are round or capable of rotundity. Everyone of her or his great creations has a mind, a heart and a moral fervour. Unlike Dickens' characters who give us only repetitive pleasure, they are usually refreshing and give new pleasure each time we meet them in the book. A true realist, Tolstoy or Jane Austen seldom draws caricatures like Dickens; his or her characters function all round.

They are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of the book seldom requires them to lead, and this is why they are able to lead their real lives so satisfactorily. Some of the most outstanding round characters, according to Forster, are “the principal characters in *War and Peace*”, almost all the people of Dostoevsky, some of Proust’s creations, Flaubert’s Madame Bovary, Thackeray’s Becky Sharp and Beatrix, Lucy Snowe of Charlotte Bronte, and Fielding’s Tom Jones and Parson Adams ( *Aspects of the Novel* 85) .

Forster refers to Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* to illustrate how the skilful use of the shifting viewpoint contributes to the greatness of the author and his work. He agrees with Percy Lubbock, the author of the valuable treatise on the art of fiction entitled *The Craft of Fiction*, that the novelist’s greatness as artist lies in his power “to bounce the reader into accepting what he says,” but while Lubbock does not put this power of the writer at the centre, he does so: “I should put it plumb in the centre” ( 86) . And then Forster explains his stand by analysing briefly Dickens’ *Bleak House* to show how the eminent Victorian bounces the reader wonderfully well. On this basis he rejects Lubbock’s contention that there should not be shifting viewpoint in a good work of fiction, and asserts that *Bleak House*, though “all to pieces” logically, bounces the reader and hence “we do not mind the shiftings of the view-point” ( 86-7) . More remarkable than *Bleak House* and Andre Gide’s *Les Faux Monnayeurs* is Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* for employing purposefully the multiple point of view to achieve the vital result as a work of thematic and artistic excellence. He functionally uses omniscient, semi-omniscient and dramatized modes of narration in consonance with the thematic and artistic demands of the narrative, and there lies his greatness because he does all this so convincingly that we accept his picture of the world willingly without any doubt. Apropos of this, Forster asserts: “... we are bounced up and down Russia — omniscient, semi-omniscient, dramatized here or there as the moment dictates — and at the end we have accepted it all” ( 88) . Naturally, he outright rejects Lubbock’s assertion that *War and Peace*, though great, would have been greater if it had only a single point of view because by doing so Tolstoy would have been able to put into it the

entire weight of his mind and art. Forster is right when he contends that a writer can resort to multiple/ shifting point of view if he can manage to do so successfully like Tolstoy and Dickens, for the laws of fiction writing are not what Lubbock understands them to be. He is justified when he avers:

Indeed this power to expand and contract perception ( of which the shifting view-point is a symptom) , this right to intermittent knowledge — I find it one of the great advantages of the novel-form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others; we can enter into people’s minds occasionally but not always, because our own minds get tired; and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. A quantity of novelists, English novelists especially, have behaved like this to the people in their books: played fast and loose with them, and I cannot see why they should be censured. ( 88)

In the last of Clark lectures entitled “Pattern and Rhythm”, Forster eulogizes Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* by stating that this is the only fictional work which has close affinity with the highest form of music, the most difficult type of rhythm like that of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as a whole. He points out that rhythm can be of two kinds: easy and difficult. The beginning of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony with ‘diddidy dum’ is an example of easy rhythm, while the rhythm of the symphony as a whole, based on the relation between its movements, is very difficult. In some great novels, we usually see the rhythm of the first kind, but it is very difficult to find in fiction the effect of the rhythm of the Fifth Symphony as a whole. Marcel Proust’s monumental work, *Remembrance of Things Past*, exemplifies rhythm in its easy form. Badly constructed and chaotic, the book does not have external form; what gives it inner unity is the rhythm it has in the form of the ‘little phrase’ in the music of Vinteuil which recurs in the book time and again. The artistic beauty of the little phrase is that at times it is very significant for the characters in the book as well as the reader, while for quite some time it is forgotten and does not mean much to anybody. According to Forster, this is the true function of rhythm in the novel; unlike the pattern,

it is not present from the beginning to the end of a work. If handled badly, rhythm is something very tedious as in the case of Galsworthy's spaniel John or Meredith's cherry trees and yachts. If a book is planned beforehand, it cannot easily have a genuine rhythm. But if handled rightly, it makes the need for an external form redundant as is evident from Proust's and Tolstoy's masterpieces. Highlighting Tolstoy's matchless achievement in fiction, Forster affirms that the great Russian has shown the kinship of fiction with music by absorbing the difficult type of rhythm — the effect of the Fifth Symphony as a whole — in *War and Peace*. Even when the Orchestra stops, we hear something that has never been actually produced, and such is the effect of the type of the Fifth Symphony as a whole. Tolstoy is able to invest his *magnum opus* with the difficult kind of rhythm like that of the Fifth Symphony as a whole by achieving in it the effect of expansion — a sort of opening out —, and not of completion. Forster elucidates it conclusively thus:

Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out. When the symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom. Cannot the novel be like that? Is not there something of it in *War and Peace*?... Such an untidy book. Yet, as we read it, do not great chords begin to sound behind us, and when we have finished does not every item — even the catalogue of strategies — lead a larger existence than was possible at the time? ( 170)

Forster believes that form is an integral part of a work of art, since it is the outcome of the artist's innate sensitiveness and his urge to impose order on what he creates. Patently, it has always been very important for the artist in the past as well as in the present. Though it is not something unchangeable because it inevitably changes from age to age, yet it is essential in one way or another as it is the manifestation of internal harmony and external unity. Small wonder Forster lauds Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, not because it is an enormous work of art presenting a vast panorama of life, but because it is remarkably artistic as well. He does not fail to notice

and emphasize its "architectural unity and pre-ordained form" ( "Our Second Greatest Novel?" *Two Cheers for Democracy*227) . Indeed, he is fascinated by the unity beneath multiplicity, presented so artistically in this novel.

The epic quality of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* elicits Forster's spontaneous admiration for it. He refers to a few types of novels of which he especially acclaims the epic novel which re-creates the whole of the age to which it belongs. And in this context he finds Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* simply outstanding because both of them express the spirit of the age they deal with. For this kind of work he also uses the term 'panorama novel'. As Virgil's *Aeneid* authentically paints the early Roman Empire, Dante's *Divine Comedy* the late Middle Ages, and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* the early twentieth century, so Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is a remarkable and reliable document about the world of the Napoleonic period. Undoubtedly, it is an indispensable literary work, an epic which truly expresses the spirit of its age — the Napoleonic wars and the life of those times.

Allied to the merit, discussed in the preceding paragraph, is Tolstoy's comprehensive vision of humanity, his alternative vision, manifested artistically in his *magnum opus*. His view of the permanence of human race, as evident in his depiction of the rise, fall and rise of the generations, is, indeed, a prayer to life and its Creator. All this becomes crystal clear when he is put beside Marcel Proust, the author of the 'second greatest novel' of the world in Forster's view. In contrast to *War and Peace*, Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, though an epic expressing the spirit of its age and "as baffling as life itself — life when apprehended by the modern cultivated man" ( "Proust," *Abinger Harvest* 110) , offers us only a new view of the impermanence of human race. To understand the point correctly, it is necessary to cast a glance at the endings of the two greatest novels of the world. No doubt the epilogue at the end of *War and Peace* is disheartening when we see the ravages the cruel passage of time has done to Natasha and Nicholas, but, to quote Forster's perceptive opinion from which it is impossible to differ,

... there the rhythmic rise, fall, rise, of the generations offers an alternative vision, whereas Proust, at the close of *Le Temps retrouve*, is tethered to his selected personages, and cannot supply their wastage by new births. He introduces a new generation it is true; Madame de Saint-Euverte is a girl instead of the anxious harridan whom we have hitherto connected with the title. But he only introduces it to slap the old in the face. The upwelling of fresh lives did not interest him, and as to babies, they were quite outside his imaginative scope. ( 112)

Thus Forster rightly infers that Proust's vision of humanity in this regard, in comparison with that of Tolstoy, is limited. The British novelist-critic advances a cogent reason for it. He points out that the two had different conceptions of time: the Russian considered time as something regular, a continuous process, while the French believed it to be something intermittent like memory and affection. To quote his words: "Tolstoy conceived of time as something regular, against which a chronicle could be stretched; to Proust it is almost as intermittent as memory and affection, and it is easier in such a cosmogony to picture the human race as always decaying and never being renovated" ( 112) . The result is that Proust's landmark work is characterized by pessimism and despair underlying his view of personal relationships and life as a whole, whereas it is not so in the case of *War and Peace* and we clearly perceive in it just the opposite of what is so apparent in *Remembrance of Things Past*, and therein lies the perennial, elevating appeal and renovative force of *War and Peace*.

In addition to many incisive comments on Tolstoy and his *War and Peace*, scattered all over his expository writings, Forster has written a useful short essay entitled "Three Stories by Tolstoy" which surely helps us in acquiring a better understanding of the different facets of his creative mind. The three stories — namely "The Cossacks", "The Death of Ivan Ilyitch" and "The Three Hermits" —, which he chooses for critical examination, are strikingly different from one another regarding the subject matter and the phase of his literary career. The first is one of his early creative writings,

which deals with war, love, mountains and ambushes, and its action mostly takes place at the foot of the Caucasus. The second story, belonging to the later period of his literary life, focuses on the illness and suffering in domestic life, far from the fresh air of the outside world. And the third story, which is also one of his later works, is a kind of folk-tale about three holy men who are simple to the extent of stupidity and hence unable to learn even the Lord's Prayer. Obviously, though these three stories are, as stated earlier, so different in subject matter, setting, etc., yet they deliver one common moral lesson that simple people are the best. In fact, they fully demonstrate Tolstoy's unflinching faith in simplicity, which remains the very cornerstone of his mental make-up despite the contradictory, changing traits in his personality from time to time. Speaking of his unswerving belief in simplicity, assuming variegated forms in the different periods of his life, Forster observes:

It took various forms at various times of his life and led him into all sorts of contradictions — sometimes he believed in fighting, sometimes in non-violence and passive resistance, sometimes he was a Christian, sometimes he wasn't, was sometimes an ascetic, sometimes a voluptuary, but the idea that simple people are best underlies all his opinions from start to finish. He was himself far from simple — one of the most complex and difficult characters with whom the historian of literature has to deal, he was an aristocrat, an intellectual, a landowner who thought property wrong, he was ravaged with introspection and remorse. But that's his faith, simplicity. ( "Three Stories by Tolstoy," *Two Cheers for Democracy*212)

Tolstoy's first masterpiece was the result of his fascination for the Cossacks' free life of love and violence during his stay in the Caucasus as a young army officer. It hinges on a Cossack village girl, Marianka, who is betrothed to a wild local youngster, but is passionately loved by a young Russian officer stationed there. For quite some time she feels tempted to desert her own people for the sake of the Russian officer; but when her fiancé is wounded by a tribesman, she turns away from her Russian lover in fury and re-

turns finally to her old lover and her own people. The plot, with all its complications, is loose, thin and stagey, but what made it “a great sensation in Russia” on its publication in 1863, was, according to Forster, the masterly “character-drawing”, “the wealth of incident” and “the splendid descriptions of scenery” ( 213) . Needless to reiterate, this story of youth, written by Tolstoy the youngman, is steeped in the author's belief in simplicity of life.

The first little masterpiece of Tolstoy was followed by such great works as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and so when he wrote “The Death of Ivan Ilyitch” — the second story that Forster discusses in the critical essay under consideration — he was a famous man of letters. This story centres around Ivan Ilyitch, a successful public servant who rises to become a judge. A decent fellow, he marries a nice girl for love. But unfortunately romance does not last long and by the time they attain middle age, they quarrel a good deal. Inevitably, the narrative becomes gruesome and ends with the agonizing death of Ivan Ilyitch whose existence is embittered by his knowledge that he is in everyone's way and that all will be happy when he is no more. But before his end, he has a great realisation which comes to him from his young peasant-servant named Gerasim, and he discovers that there has been something grossly wrong with him in that he, unlike his servant, has never been able to rise above selfishness. Thus through the humble peasant servant he gets enlightenment and inner light, and this demonstrates Tolstoy's unwavering faith in the indispensability of simplicity. The gruesome end of the story is lit up with illumination, and Forster appropriately remarks:

And Ivan Ilyitch discovers before the end that something is wrong with his life; unlike Gerasim he has lived only for himself — even when he was in love with his wife it was for the sake of his own pleasure, and that's what has been wrong. The illumination comes, and at the supreme moment he understands. ‘In the place of death there was light.’ ( 215)

Forster rightly points out that while “The Death of Ivan Ilyitch” is an indictment of modern civilization, Tolstoy's “The Three Hermits” is intended to show what civilization needs. It is about a noble

bishop, who is on a voyage to meet three hermits who live on an island saving their souls. When he meets them, he is impressed by their genuine holiness and sincerity, but is shocked to see that they are so ignorant as they do not know even the Lord's Prayer. However, he teaches it to them with great difficulty after repeated efforts, for they are quite stupid. But soon after his ship leaves them, he finds them chasing him running over the surface of the waves to ask him to teach them the Lord's Prayer again because they have forgotten it. The inference which Forster draws after a close analysis of the story is that the author all the time highlights his belief in simple people and the immense value of simplicity in life. Forster elucidates it thus:

You will see now what I mean by saying Tolstoy believes in simple people. And he believed in a different sort of simplicity at various times in his life. When he was young, and himself a bit of a rip, he believed in the Cossacks, because they were spontaneous and loved animal violence and pleasure. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch* he has shifted his affection to the Russian peasant, Gerasim, who is placid and imperturbable and unselfish. And in *The Three Hermits* he recommends a third type — the saint who is an imbecile in the world's judgement, but walks on the water through the powers of the spirit. Tolstoy was inconsistent. Here are some of his inconsistencies, and they laid him open to attack. But he never wavered in his central faith: simplicity. ( 215)

However, Forster concludes the essay by affirming that it is not easy to find a suitable mode of simplicity in the modern industrialized society, and that Tolstoy could accentuate simplicity in life because his outlook was agricultural and so he never thought of the modern world of machines, etc. Apparently, these little masterpieces of Tolstoy do not possess much appeal for the readers of the present times.

The above discussion leads us to draw a couple of inferences. First, Forster seems to be overwhelmed by Tolstoy's genius as reflected in *War and Peace*, and he feels that any serious, detailed discussion of fiction means references to Tolstoy's mind and art time and again. He admits it towards the end of the Clark lectures

on the novel when he states that in the beginning *War and Peace* was referred to and with a reference to it “we must end” ( *Aspects of the Novel* 170) . Also, he, without the least hesitation and doubt, places *War and Peace* among the world's three great books, the two being Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ( “A Book That Influenced Me,” *Two Cheers for Democracy* 222) , and, again, proclaims: “Most people agree that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel that western civilization has produced” ( “Our Second Greatest Novel?” *Two Cheers for Democracy* 226) . Secondly, a careful reader easily marks a glaring blemish in Forster's sizable body of statements about Tolstoy's fiction — viz. this outstanding fictionist-critic, despite his vast range of knowledge of world fiction, does not make even once a mention of his such great novels as *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Then, it is surprisingly disappointing, rather appalling that notwithstanding his lasting interest in, and admiration for, Tolstoy, he has not written even a short critical piece exclusively on *War and Peace* or any of his major novels, while he has published an essay on his three stories and has written two articles on Marcel Proust, two on Virginia Woolf and independent pieces on many writers. Nevertheless, despite the above-mentioned lacunas in his response to Tolstoy's fiction, his observations on the inimitable Russian writer are mostly balanced, and hence indispensable to apprehend and assess correctly his unique fictional genius.

### Notes

1. Speaking of Gertrude Stein's unsuccessful effort to banish the traditional notion of time from the novel, and the impossibility of rejecting the story element, Forster says:  

She fails, because as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all, and in her later writing we can see the slope down which she is slipping. She wants to abolish this whole aspect of the story, this sequence in chronology, and my heart goes out to her. She cannot do it without abolishing the sequence between the sentences. But this is not

effective unless the order of words in the sentences is also abolished, which in its turn entails the abolition of the order of the letters or sounds in the words. And now she is over the precipice. There is nothing to ridicule in such an experiment as hers. It is much more important to play about like this plan to rewrite the *Waverley* novels. Yet the experiment is doomed to failure. The time-sequence cannot be destroyed without carrying in its ruin all that should have taken its place; the novel that would express values only becomes unintelligible and therefore valueless. ( *Aspects of the Novel* 49)

2. In this context, it is pertinent to refer to Forster's discussion with the *Paris Riview* interviewers about the process of turning an actual person into a fictional one, and thus making the two vastly different from each other:

A useful trick is to look back upon such a person with half-closed eyes, fully describing certain characteristics. I am left with about two-thirds of a human being and can get to work. A likeness isn't aimed at and couldn't be obtained, because a man's only himself amidst the particular circumstances of his life and not amid other circumstances. So that to refer back to Dent when Philip was in difficulties with Gino, or to ask one and one-half Miss Dickinsons how Helen should comport herself with an illegitimate baby would have ruined the atmosphere and the book. When all goes well, the original material soon disappears, and a character who belongs to the book and nowhere else emerges. ( *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 31)

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## 5

## “GENIUS IN THE RAW”: VIRGINIA WOOLF ON LEO TOLSTOY

In fiction criticism, it is common parlance that Tolstoy is one of the greatest novelists of the world of all times and that his *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, is the greatest novel of the world. But this almost universally accepted literary judgment on Tolstoy's creative fictional genius was arrived at not as naturally and smoothly as it appears to be, particularly in England. The early British response to him was not favourable and encouraging. George Meredith and Thomas Hardy perhaps never mentioned him in their expository writings. Henry James, his contemporary, who swayed the British and America fictional scene for about three decades from 1881 onwards, both as theorist and practitioner of the art of fiction, denigrated *War and Peace*, together with *The Newcomes* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, as “large loose baggy monsters” ( “Preface to The Tragic Muse,” *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* 84) , and, along with his disciple Joseph Conrad, refused to take him seriously ( Donald Davie, “Introduction,” *Russian Literature and Modern English* 2) , while both of them adored Turgenev. The most influential literary critic of the later nineteenth and the earlier twentieth century, George Saintsbury, admitted only Turgenev as an outstanding Russian novelist, ignoring Tolstoy's genius completely. No wonder when *War and Peace* first appeared in English in three volumes in 1886, being translated from the French, it was reviewed adversely in the *Guardian* on February 16, 1886: “...the whole is told with a sort of persistent weariness, an air of sarcastic unbelief in men and manners and causes, which seems to reflect the Nihilism of the author in every portion of his work.” Again, Maurice Thompson dismissed derisively Tolstoy the man as well as the novelist as early as July 23, 1887 in the *Literary World* of Boston:

Tolstoy is a rich man who prefers to live in brutal vulgarity,

a man who pretends to hate riches, but clings to all his cash; a heartless theorist, who pretends to believe that no evil should be forcibly resisted; who makes a pretence of shoe-making in order to attract attention to himself; who dresses like a clown for the same purpose, and who writes novels as dirty and obscene as the worst parts of Walt Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass'....

However, notwithstanding this early neglect and rejection of Tolstoy, in England and America, D.H. Lawrence expressed boldly his views on Tolstoy in his letters and critical writings which became publicly known only after 1925. His first opinion about the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian novelists, including Tolstoy, is contained in his letter written to Catherine Carswell on December 2, 1916 which was first published in 1932 in *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* edited by Aldous Huxley. In this letter, he remarked: “They have meant an enormous amount to me; Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoievsky — mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest of all time. And now, with something of a shock, I realise a certain crudity and thick, uncivilised, insensitive stupidity about them, I realise how much finer and purer and more ultimate our own stuff is” ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* 383-84) . But in 1948 E.M. Forster came out vigorously with the assertion that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is indubitably the greatest novel of the world: “Most people agree that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel that Western civilization has produced” ( “Our Second Greatest Novel,” *Two Cheers for Democracy* 226) . And then within a span of few years only, Somerset Maugham, in the similar vein, pronounced his following widely known verdict after which Tolstoy's great novelistic genius could not be questioned:

I think Balzac is the greatest novelist the world has ever known, but I think Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel. No doubt with such a wide sweep, dealing with so momentous a period of history and with such a vast array of characters, was even written before, nor, I surmise, will ever be written again. It has been justly called an epic. I can think of no other work of fiction that could with truth be so described. ( *The*



*World's Ten Greatest Novels 25)*

The emergence and acquiescence of Tolstoy as one of the foremost fictionists and the writer of the greatest novel of the world in the fourth and fifth decades of the present century cannot be attributed to the perceptive critical faculty which E.M. Forster or Somerset Maugham was endowed with. The fact is that it was Virginia Woolf, a singularly original novelist-critic of the current century, who for the first time could measure and reveal the astonishing depth and breadth of great Russian novelists, including Tolstoy. E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and many other later British novelists and critics only reiterated, elaborated and explained what she had pronounced repeatedly on Tolstoy in her essays, reviews, sketches, letters, diary etc. Her cogitations on Tolstoy's fictional art are scattered in the volumes of her expository writings such as *The Common Reader* ( Series I and II) , *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, *The Moment and Other Essays*, *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*, *Granite and Rainbow*, *A Room of One's Own*, *Contemporary Writers*, *Moments of Being*, *Books and Portraits*, *A Writer's Diary*, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* ( 4 Vols.) , etc. She not only wrote about his writings, but also published and translated his works into English. In the letter written to Lady Robert Cecil in June 1920, she informed that the Hogarth Press was bringing out Tolstoy's *The Table Talk* ( *The Questions of Things Happenings: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. II 432) . Again, she collaborated with S.S. Koteiansky on two books, *Tolstoy's Love Letters* and *Talk with Tolstoy* by A.B. Goldenevizer which were published by the Hogarth Press in 1923 ( 573) . Then, her letter to Vanessa Bell, written on Christmas Day, 1910, reveals her keen interest in Tolstoy's book, *What I Believe* ( *The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. I 442) .

The present chapter is an attempt at assimilating, interpreting and evaluating the numerous remarks she has made about Leo Tolstoy as a fictionist in her writings with a view to evincing the fact that she has contributed most to enable him to get his rightful place in the realm of fiction. And this she daringly did much against the wave of neglect and adverse criticism of Tolstoy initiated by her

seniors and established masters like Hardy, Meredith, Henry James and Joseph Conard.

Let us, then, examine some of the most significant observations of Virginia Woolf on Tolstoy. We begin with her elaborate, forceful remarks about him made around the year 1920 in two of her critical pieces, "Modern Fiction" and "The Russian Point of View," contained in her most famous collection of essays, *The Common Reader*, Series I, the first one of which is her best-known piece of fiction-criticism. The concluding paragraph of the essay begins with the statement that even the most elementary discussion of modern fiction cannot be complete without a reference to the Russian influence on it, and "if the Russians are mentioned," she continues to assert, "one runs the risk of feeling that to write of any fiction save theirs is waste of time" ( *The Common Reader*, First Series 193) . One obvious reason of this greatness of the Russian novel and its sweeping impact on modern world fiction, can be seen, according to her, in the fact that nowhere else can we have a profound understanding of the human soul comparable with it, and that, too, not with the mind, but with the heart soaked in fathomless love for fellow human beings.<sup>1</sup> She dubs her popular British contemporary novelists like Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet and H.G. Wells materialists, and eulogizes James Joyce and the Russian novelists by calling them spiritualists who care for the inner being of man, and not for the mere external details of life. She discovers in Tolstoy and other Russian fictionists not only a concern for the inner life, but also an unmistakable saintliness which consists in their immeasurable sympathy and love for the suffering human beings. To quote her own words:

In every great Russian writer we seem to discern the features of a saint, sympathy for the sufferings of others, love towards them, endeavour to reach some goal worthy of the most exacting demands of the spirit constitute saintliness. It is the saint in them which confounds us with a feeling of our own irreligious triviality, and turns so many of our famous novels to tinsel and trickery. ( "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader*, First Series 194)

This saintliness of the Russian novelist has another side; it makes his conclusions about life, though 'comprehensive and compassionate,' deeply sad<sup>2</sup> and somewhat inconclusive. It is this indeterminateness of the Russian mind that fails him to offer definite answers to the variegated questions about life which are "left to sound on after the story is over in hopeless interrogation that fills us with a deep, and finally it may be with a resentful, despair" ("Modern Fiction" 194). Virginia Woolf, being a very reflective and introspective writer, considers this indeterminate human world presented by Tolstoy and others as true and unquestionable, for life, in its essence, is so, and this only patently shows that 'they see further than we do and without our gross impediments of vision' (194).

The article, "The Russian Point of View," is completely devoted to the Russian fiction writers, their greatness and their influences on the modern mind. After discussing the Russian writers, in general, the problems of reading them through English translations which may not present them in their entirety and true self, their essential saintliness and matters related to it, the soul that is the very core of the Russian fiction which requires a lot of concentration and efforts on the part of the English reader to comprehend it because he is alien to the soul, Virginia Woolf devotes about ten pages of the essay to the analysis and appraisal of the fictional genius of three major Russian fictionists — Tchekov, Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. In the last three pages of this piece of criticism, she exclusively focuses on Tolstoy. She begins with the assertion that he is the greatest of all novelists by virtue of being the author of *War and Peace*. He, in her opinion, is the writer who does not create the impression of a foreigner on an English mind and in whose view of life it is hard to detect some oddity — the two glaring drawbacks which disturb the reader of Dostoevsky, despite his outstanding creative faculty.

Virginia Woolf enumerates some of the striking merits of Tolstoy. First of all, she stresses the wonderful element of familiarity in his writings. She finds him just like every English man, and for that matter just like every common reader, habitual of looking at every thing from the external to the internal, from the exterior to the inte-

rior. Apropos of this, she avers: "From his first words we can be sure of one thing at any rate — here is a man who sees what we see, who proceeds, too, as we are accustomed to proceed, not from the inside outwards, but from the outside inwards ("The Russian Point of View," *The Common Reader*, First Series 229). Then, the note of universality is very well-marked in his fiction in that the world portrayed by him is very close to the life we have all around us. He would show the postman knocking at the gates around 8 a.m. and people retiring to bed between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. Another remarkable thing about him is that while reading fiction the reader finds the author highly educated with every kind of experience, and not simply a savage or a child of nature. Again, he at once creates the impression on the reader's mind that he is endowed with sharp and well-trained senses and intellect. All this enables him to paint life in all its minutest details. In fact, nothing seems to escape him, and we all the time feel as if we were looking at life from a mountain-top with a powerful telescope on our eyes, thus seeing clearly everything animate or inanimate, internal or external. He is simply God-like omniscient and omnipresent. Speaking of his amazing power of minute observation and accurate delineation, Virginia Woolf says:

Nothing glances off him unrecoded. Nobody, therefore, can so convey the excitement of sport, the beauty of horses, and all the fierce desirability of the world to the senses of a strong young man. Every twig, every feather sticks to his magnet. He notices the blue or red of a child's frock; the way a horse shifts its tail; the sound of a cough; the action of a man trying to put his hands into pockets that have been sewn up. And what his infallible eye reports of a cough or a trick of the hands his infallible brain refers to something hidden in the character, so that we know his people, not only by the way they love and their views on politics and the immortality of the soul, but also by the way they sneeze and choke. Even in a translation we feel that we have a set on a mountain-top and a telescope put into our hands. Everything is astonishingly clear and absolutely sharp. (229-30)

What is highly commendable about Tolstoy's art is that

alongwith the most commonplace details of life, the reader is made to see and feel the very intensity of life, the innermost depth of it, which inevitably fills him with the powerful feeling of pleasure and fear. Virginia Woolf illustrates it from Tolstoy's famous story, "Family Happiness." She refers to a short passage, quoted below, to affirm that Tolstoy makes us feel joy and fear very much like Masha in this story whose feelings are recorded by the author thus:

Suddenly a strange thing happened to me: first I ceased to see what was around me; then his face seemed to vanish till only the eyes were left, shining over against mine; next the eyes seemed to be in my own head, and then all became confused — I could see nothing and was forced to shut my eyes, in order to break loose from the feeling of pleasure and fear which his gaze was producing in me.... ( 230)

Virginia Woolf further refers to two descriptions, contained in this very story, to spotlight this patent feature of Tolstoy's work — viz. the intense feeling of pleasure and fear and man's attempt to escape this feeling by shutting his eyes to a scene or description embodying it. The two scenes are: the young girl strolling with her lover in a garden at night; and the newly married couple moving swiftly and gleefully in their drawing-room. Virginia Woolf points out that coming across descriptions such as these which are quite frequent in Tolstoy's fictional work, the reader closes the book and shuts the eyes to experience the intense feeling of happiness better and to escape the feeling of fear. Though the feeling of joy is uppermost in Tolstoy's writings, yet the sense of fear is invariably there. The reason may be that the reader feels that the happiness as portrayed by Tolstoy is too acute to last long, and that ultimately life is to offer man disaster too. This inalienable mingling of fear with pleasure in Tolstoy may also be due to man's awareness of the transience of intense happiness leading him to confront with the baffling question, very much like Pozdnyshv in *The Kreutzer Sonata*: "But why live?" "What is the meaning of life?" "What is man's aim of life?" Apropos of this, Virginia Woolf writes:

There is always at the centre of all the brilliant and flashing petals of the flower this scorpion, "Why live?" There is always

at the centre of the book some Olenin or Pierre, or Levin who gathers into himself all experience, turns the world round between his fingers, and never ceases to ask, even as he enjoys it, what is the meaning of it, and what should be our aims. It is not the priest who shatters our desires most effectively: it is the man who has known them, and loved them himself. When he derides them, the world indeed turns to dust and ashes beneath our feet. Thus fear mingles with our pleasure....

( 2)

The blending of intense pleasure and frightening fear in Tolstoy's fiction prompts Virginia Woolf to hold that of the great Russian writers, he "most enthralls us and most repels" ( 231) . In this connection, it may be observed that many scholars of fiction may not agree with her. It is true that Tolstoy often throws us into rapture by making us experience the profound feeling of happiness, by making us delve deep into life, by bringing us into close contact with the whole of life — the familiar external life and the puzzling internal — and by presenting before us a world dominated by life, the vast mass of life. But to say that he repels us because he makes us aware of the constant presence of fear in life and of the transience of happiness is not fair. In fact, we read him with a feeling of pleasure and a sense of wonder, and wish to read him again and again so as to feel the very warmth of life, the wholeness of it. His fiction is certainly delightful, but not repulsive, though at times tedious, dull and morally ponderous it may be. After remarking that he most repels us, Virginia Woolf perhaps soon realises her prejudice against, and unfairness to, him. This is the reason why she concludes the essay with the apt observation that "the mind takes its bias from the place of its birth, and no doubt, when it strikes upon a literature so alien as the Russian, flies off at a tangent far from the truth" ( 231) .

Virginia Woolf considers character-creation as the most important function of the creative power of a fiction writer, and it is the portrayal of characters whose every nerve is alive that makes a novel truly great, for she believes that the novel-form is evolved primarily to create living characters to depict life truthfully with all its exterior and interior, and not to "preach doctrines, sing songs, or

celebrate the glories of the British Empire" ( "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 97) . She repeatedly admires Tolstoy for creating living characters with flesh and bones, with mind and heart and soul. In her article, "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," she compares Annabella, the heroine of the play entitled *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, with Anna Karenina of Tolstoy with a view to revealing the difference between the two characters, thus highlighting Tolstoy's commendable art of delineating characters bubbling over with life in all its depth, range and intricacy. The central figure of Ford's drama is not adequately portrayed and is always shown at the height of her passion without depicting the natural growth and process of her passion: on the other hand, Anna Karenina, one of Tolstoy's memorable female characters, is painted naturally with astonishing lifelikeness. Comparing the two, Virginia Woolf states:

Nobody describes her. She is always at the height of her passion, never at its approach. Compare her with Anna Karenina. The Russian woman is flesh and blood, nerves and temperament, has heart, brain, body and mind where the English girl is flat and crude as a face painted on a playing card; she is without depth, without range, without intricacy. ( *The Common Reader*, First Series 78)

Virginia Woolf also compares Tolstoy with Scott in order to accentuate the fact that while the former is one of the most wonderful observers and painters of the subtleties and intricacies of human heart, the latter is not ( "Sir Walter Scott," *The Moment and Other Essays* 58) .

Again, in the article on Thomas Hardy written soon after his death in 1928, she exposes his weakness in drawing living characters, and points out that he fails to enable us to "know them as we know Pierre or Natasha" ( *The Common Reader*, Second Series 253) of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, from inside and outside and all around. While the great Russian fully reveals to us the complication, involvement and turmoil of his people's inner life and their relations with one another, Hardy fails to do so. Tolstoy portrays his characters in their entirety, and thus we know Anna Karenina wholly; the

inside of her mind, her charm, her despair and her passion. He is simply wonderful in shedding light on the human heart, mind and soul. He "would pierce through the flesh; would reveal the soul — the soul alone, wandering out into the Waterloo Road, asking of life some tremendous question which would sound on and on in our ears after the book was finished" ( "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 97) . In every one of his novels, there are characters who seem to the reader so real that they have the compelling power to make us think through them not only about the world of the particular novel in which they figure, but also about all kinds of things — love, religion, war, peace, family life, the balls in country towns, the eternity of the soul, the natural scenes and sights, etc. *War and Peace* is the greatest novel of the world because there is hardly any aspect of human experience which is not presented to us through the life-like characters that crowd it ( 98) .

The novelist may create large figures who may be extremely impressive in themselves, and yet they may not be very true to life and convincing, if they are not the result of the author's intense sensitivity and do not fit in with one another. Tolstoy, according to Virginia Woolf, is the greatest of novelists because he is capable of creating living characters in relation to one another by dint of his remarkable sensitivity. She reveals Tolstoy's greatness by making a close comparison between his art of creating characters with that of Dickens whom the former had acknowledged as one of his master. Drawing the comparison between these two great novelists' art of character-delineation in order to highlight the matchlessness of Tolstoy in this regard, Virginia Woolf affirms:

Though the heart of Dickens burned with indignation for public wrongs, he lacked sensitiveness privately, so that his attempts at intimacy failed. His great figures are on too large a scale to fit nicely into each other. They do not interlock, They need company to show them off and action to bring out their humours. They are often out of touch with each other. In Tolstoy, in the scenes between Princess Marya and her father, the old Prince, the pressure of character upon character is never relaxed. The tension is perpetual, every nerve in the character is alive. It

may be for this reason that Tolstoy is the greatest of novelists. In Dickens the characters are impressive in themselves but not in their personal relations. Often, indeed, when they talk to each other they are vapid in the extreme or sentimental beyond belief. One thinks of them as independent, existing forever, unchanged, like monoliths looking up into the sky. So it is that we begin to want something smaller, more intense, more intricate. ( "Phases of Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 113-4)

The characters of Tolstoy in all his major novels, including *War and Peace*, fill the reader not with disappointment and sense of superficiality and triviality, but with the "inexhaustible richness of human sensibility" ( "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," *The Common Reader*, First Series 80) . This is the reason why innumerable deaths of men and women in other books, according to Virginia Woolf, "move us less than the suffering of one of Tolstoy's flies" ( 83) . Tolstoy's characters bring us into close contact with passionate intensity, sublimity, pleasure and curiosity. Another special feature of his art of characterisation is the immense variety and complexity of his characters; there is almost 'God's plenty' in his fictional world. Virginia Woolf reveals the weakness of the simple, repetitious, and hence nearly lifeless characters of Charlotte Bronte by comparing them with the many-faceted, vivacious and hence absolutely living people that inhabit Tolstoy's or Jane Austen's world. About this, she affirms:

The drawbacks of being Jane Eyre are not far to seek. Always to be a governess and always to be in love is a serious limitation in a world which is full, after all, of people who are neither one nor the other. The characters of a Jane Austen or of a Tolstoy have a million facets compared with these. They live and are complex by means of their effect upon many different people who serve to mirror them in the round. They move hither and thither whether their creators watch them or not, and the world in which they live seems to us an independent world which we can visit, now that they have created it, by ourselves. ( "Jane Eyre," *The Common Reader*, First Series 198)

Variegated experiences, acquired through travels, adventures, social intercourse, etc. surely go a long way in sharpening and enriching the novelistic powers of a writer. In fact, wide and profound experience is absolutely indispensable for the novelist to create a work of fiction, for it is experience that enables a writer to comprehend and re-create life in all its intensity and authenticity. This, in Virginia Woolf's opinion, accounts largely for the greatness of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, which is simply astonishing in the recreation of the vastness of life with utmost truthfulness, "a certain looking-glass likeness to life." The novel is saturated with the true experiences of life and society that its author could have as a soldier and as a rich youngman observing society closely from various angles. The book is simply amazing so far as the artistic accumulation of immeasurable wealth of the experiences of many lives and many minds is concerned ( "Phases of Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 136) . As a matter of fact, the best of Conard's and Tolstoy's fiction would have been reduced to naught, if the former had not been a sailor and the latter had not been a soldier and a wealthy man, seeing and experiencing war and society closely. To quote Virginia Woolf's own words:

The best part of Conard's novels, for instance, would be destroyed if it had been impossible for him to be sailor. Take away all that Tolstoy knew of war as a soldier, of life and society as a young man whose education admitted him to all sorts of experience, and *War and Peace* would be incredibly impoverished. ( "Women and Fiction," *Granite and Rainbow* 79)

She feels that a novelist like Charlotte Bronte or Emile Bronte would have bequeathed to posterity much better books than what they have done, "if experience and intercourse and travel had been granted her" ( *A Room of One's Own* 67) . She avers that but for the type of life with all kinds of experiences, moral or immoral, that Tolstoy lived, he would not have been able to write a masterpiece such as *War and Peace*:

... there was a young man living freely with this gypsy or with that great lady; going to the wars; picking up unhindered and uncensored all that varied experiences of human life which

served him so splendidly later when he came to write his books. Had Tolstoi lived at the Priory in seclusion with a married lady 'cut off from what is called the world,' however edifying the moral lesson, he could scarcely, I thought, have written *War and Peace*. ( 68)

The portrayal of the abundance of life in all its baffling variety may make a novel truly outstanding by investing it with "a certain looking-glass likeness to life," but this very strength may threaten its very structure and meaning because the presentation of too much of life makes it a work of infinite complexity with so many varied viewpoints, judgements, emotions, thoughts, etc. What saves this kind of book from complete collapse is the novelist's integrity, and it is this that strikes us most in Tolstoy, thus enabling him to present in his masterpiece a vast view of life, as vast as the universe itself, in a form as artistically satisfying as humanly possible. What Virginia Woolf means by integrity in this context is the novelist's conviction that what he communicates to the reader through his work is the truth, with the result the reader feels convinced of the people and events in the narrative despite his feeling that before reading the book he would have never thought of these people and events to be lifelike and convincing. Tolstoy, in Virginia Woolf's view, possesses the novelist's integrity in the highest degree, and it is the real strength of his monumental work, *War and Peace*. Apropos of this, she observes:

The whole structure, it is obvious, thinking back on any famous novel, is one of infinite complexity, because it is thus made up of so many different judgements, of so many different kinds of emotion. The wonder is that any book so composed holds together for more than a year or two, or can possibly mean to the English reader what it means for the Russian or the Chinese. But they do hold together occasionally very remarkably. And what holds them together in these rare instances of survival ( I was thinking of *War and Peace*) is something that one calls integrity, though it has nothing to do with paying one's bills or behaving honourably in an emergency. ( 68-9)

Virginia Woolf also judges Tolstoy's creative mind by the touch-

stone of the concept of androgynous mind. Being a psychological writer to the backbone, she offers us a very interesting view of human mind, which is a very mysterious organ upon which we depend so completely and yet about which we know almost nothing very precisely. She explains and endorses Coleridge's concept of the androgynous mind, the highest type of creative mind. Every person has a brain which is governed by two powers, the male and the female. In the man's brain the male is more dominant than the female, and in the woman's mind the female predominates over the male. What Coleridge means by a great mind that is androgynous is that in a man the female part of his brain must have its impact, and the woman must have intercourse with the male in her. For it "is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create any more than a mind that is purely feminine..." ( 94) . Apparently, the androgynous mind is "resonant and porous," communicates emotions spontaneously without any hindrance, is undivided and incandescent, and hence essentially and naturally creative ( 94) . Virginia Woolf holds that Galsworthy and Kipling lack suggestive power and appear crude and immature to a woman because they do not have a spark of the woman in them. According to her, Shakespeare, Keats, Sterne, Cowper, Lamb and Coleridge possessed androgynous minds. Coming to Tolstoy, she affirms that he belongs to the class of writers like Milton, Ben Jonson and Wordsworth, who "had a dash too much of the male in them" ( 99) . This is the reason why Tolstoy's later novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, is not a great work of art and does not possess universal appeal. Small wonder even a modern British male novelist like Joyce Cary rejected the picture of life presented in it as unconvincing.<sup>3</sup> The obvious cause of this seems to be the fact that his wife Sofya became faithless to him and flirted with a composer at the age of 52, thus making him develop a harsh attitude towards woman in general. When he wrote *War and Peace*, he had a very happy married life, living in complete harmony with his wife as evidenced by the fact that his wife copied his voluminous work seven times in her hand. This leads us to infer that while *War and Peace*, universally admitted as the greatest novel of the

world till to-day, is the artistic creation of an androgynous mind, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is the product of a flawed artist overdominated by the male in him and overprejudiced against the woman of female principle. The discussion leads Virginia Woolf to conclude: "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated" ( 99) .

Virginia Woolf finds Tolstoy an illustrious writer in yet another way. Interested in explaining psychology, particularly her own psychology, she affirms that every day in human life is made of moments of 'being' and 'non-being.' By moments of 'being' she means the moments of revelation, deep realisation, illumination or radiance for which James Joyce uses the term 'epiphany.' These separate moments of 'being' are embedded in many more moments of 'non-being' — the moments of day-to-day life with commonplace experiences which hardly haunt the memory of a man and are seldom remembered even for a short while. Virginia Woolf asserts that the real novelist is able to delineate both kinds of being in his work, that is, both the moments of being and non-being. Tolstoy, according to her, is remarkably successful in picking and portraying the moments of both the kinds of being in his writings, and is very much close to Jane Austen, Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray in this respect. Notwithstanding her great admiration for James Joyce, she does not place him in this class of great writers, for he attaches utmost importance to the moments of being, without giving due significance to the moments of non-being. Tolstoy is a complete novelist because of his equal stress on, and artistically effective delineation of, both the facets of life — the moments of 'being' and those of 'non-being.'

Virginia Woolf eulogizes the Russian novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky for imparting new dimensions to the novel, thus making it "larger, saner and much more profound than ours ( English) " ( "On Rereading Meredith," *Granite and Rainbow* 49) . Consequently, in the great novels of Tolstoy, one discerns "human life in all its width and depth, with every shade of feeling and subtlety of thought ... without the distortion of personal eccentricity or mannerism" ( 49) .

His writings, like those of his distinguished compatriots, demonstrate his unflinching belief that life is too serious to be juggled with, and too significant to be manipulated. This is the reason why he accumulates the bits of life of all kinds, interior or exterior, ugly or beautiful, with a view to understanding life as comprehensively as possible, and to penetrating deeper into the human soul with immense power of sustained insight and unswerving reverence for truth. This makes him strikingly different from, and superior to, most of the English novelists, including the greatest names of the period such as Dickens, Meredith and Hardy.

Tolstoy is, in fact, "a whole world," as Maxim Gorky proclaims, and therefore it is not surprising that Virginia Woolf has to refer to *War and Peace* — a highly realistic work of art — to illustrate her concept of the poetic novel. She holds that the poetry of situation is the typical variety of poetry which suits the novel more naturally than the poetry of language because it employs mainly the material which comes to the novelist automatically. To explain her point, she cites, besides the scene in which Catherine pulls the feather from the pillow in Emile Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, the intensely poetic situation in which Natasha in *War and Peace* peeps through the window to gaze at the stars. What is special about it is that the poetry consists not in words, but in the intensely of the scene. The prose used in this scene is casual and quiet, and hence to quote it does not produce any poetic effect. It is the reading and re-reading and recalling of the entire scene running over chapters which fill the reader with the profound, unforgettable impression of beauty and intensity that approximates to this high kind of haunting poetry. Virginia Woolf observes:

When Natasha in *War and Peace* look out of the window at the stars, Tolstoy produces a feeling of deep and intense poetry without any disruption or that disquieting sense of song being sung to people who listen. He does this because his poetic sense finds expression in the poetry of the situation or because his characters express it in their own words, which are often of the simplest. We have been living in them, so that, when Natasha leans on the window sill and thinks of her life

to come, our feelings of the poetry of the moment do not lie in what she says so much as in our sense of her who is saying it. ( "Phases of Fiction" 137)

Tolstoy is admired by Virginia Woolf for his competence to criticise society convincingly and persuasively. This he is able to do because of his profound understanding of mankind. She compares Hardy, the author of *Jude the Obscure*, who makes a case against society, with Tolstoy, and points out that the former is an instance of artistic incompetence and failure, while the latter is perfectly successful in his intentions. Explaining her viewpoint, she says:

In *Jude the Obscure* argument is allowed to dominate impression, with the result that though the misery of the book is overwhelming it is not tragic. As calamity succeeds calamity we feel that the case against society is not being argued fairly or with profound understanding of the facts. Here is nothing of that width and force and knowledge of mankind which, when Tolstoy criticises society, makes his indictment formidable. Here we have revealed to us the petty cruelty of men, not the large injustice of the gods. ( "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," *The Common Reader*, Second Series 255)

One more reason why Tolstoy is one of the foremost novelists of the world is that he is a highly deliberate, painstaking craftsman, and considers the novel a work of art. Virginia Woolf, in her review article on E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, holds that the English fiction writers do not take the novel seriously, and do not rate it as an accomplished work of art in the manner in which the French and the Russian novelists do. Much of the greatness of the novel, *War and Peace*, like many other masterpieces of this genre, can be attributed to the constant revisions and re-writing of the book with utmost care and insight; the stupendous novel was written and re-written seven times with a view to lending it thematic and artistic perfection to the extent to which it was possible for the artist ( "The Art of Fiction," *The Moment and Other Essays* 93) .

Virginia Woolf is not simply laudatory in her analysis of the Russian novelists, for she does not fail to mark their blemishes. Even when she extols their saintliness leading to a picture of life,

inconclusive and sad, she rightly points out that something significant escapes them, and it is the natural joy in the comic side of life — the resplendent natural English sense of humour —, in the splendour of the earth, in the joys of the body and in the workings of the intellect which are so clearly visible in British fiction from Laurence Sterne down to Joyce Cary. These observations of Virginia Woolf apply to Tolstoy most, as she refers to him time and again and concludes the essay "The Russian Point of View" with fairly comprehensive remarks about him, and repeatedly proclaims him the greatest of Russian novelists.

Virginia Woolf does not fail to notice the irreparable damage caused to Tolstoy's creative genius by the disastrous later part of his married life with Sofya, by the "alliance of the intense belief of genius with the easy-going non-belief or compromise of ordinary humanity" ( "Not One of Us," *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* 107) . Tolstoy could save his talent from complete collapse and ruin by virtue of his sheer power of conviction which enabled him to evolve his unique, eccentric philosophy of life all alone or in a monastery, though the same power of conviction can be said to be responsible for the destruction of normal human happiness.

Virginia Woolf is aware of the structural defects that are bound to creep into the novels of a writer like Tolstoy who tries to present the world in all its vastness, in all its breadth and depth. His novels suffer from the cracks that dislocate them as the action in them stretches over vast space and time. For instance, this is true of even a novel like *Anna Karenina* in which the narrative stretches over a space and time much narrower than that of *War and Peace*. This is evident when the novelist in this book has to pass from Levin to Anna: he "jars his story and wrenches and arrests our sympathies" ( "The Cinema," *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* 171) . Another thing that makes Virginia Woolf unhappy with Tolstoy is his contempt for women, particularly visible in his later fiction. She confesses that out of the sense of vanity, she feels depressed by women-haters like Tolstoy ( *A Writer's Diary* 109) .

In short, Virginia Woolf points to and highlights the indebtedness of British novelists to Tolstoy ( "On Re-reading Novels," *The*



*Moment and Other Essays* 127) . She assigns him the highest place in the domain of fiction, and maintains that his novels, like those of the most leading fictionists such as Dickens, Trollope, Henry James and the Brontes, are to be perpetually read and discussed ( "Sir Walter Scott" 50) . Naturally, no English novelist, in her opinion, can be compared with Tolstoy without making the comparison itself ludicrous. This is evident from the fact that, despite her rating James Joyce very high and calling him a spiritualist, when she refers to Tolstoy while making some observations on James Joyce in her diary, she at once realises her mistake and records: "...but it is entirely absurd to compare him with Tolstoy" ( *A Writer's Diary* 50) . Again, while jotting down her views on *Esther Waters* and *Tess*, she makes a remark which evinces Tolstoy's greatness even in the matter of narrative technique: "...Think how Tolstoi would have done it" ( 87) ! Re-reading him in 1940, she recalls her earlier readings and impressions, and passes the following, perhaps the last, final judgement on him in these words:

I read Tolstoy at breakfast — Goldenweiser that I translated with Kot in 1923 and have almost forgotten. Always the same reality — like touching an exposed electric wire. Even so imperfectly conveyed — his rugged short cut mind — to me the most, not sympathetic, but inspiring, rousing; genius in the raw. Thus more disturbing, more "shocking" more of a thunderclap, even on art, even on literature, than any other writer. I remember that was my feeling about *War and Peace*, read in bed at Twickenham. Old Savage picked it up, "Splendid stuff!" and Jean tried to admire what was a revelation to me. Its directness, its reality. Yet he's against photographic realism( 329)

To conclude, from the foregoing discussion based on the systematic interpretation of the variegated observations of Virginia Woolf on Tolstoy, scattered all over her expository writings, two clear-cut inferences can be drawn. First, she does not offer us a comprehensive critique of Tolstoy; as a matter of fact, her discussion of Tolstoy is only a record of her impressions about him, formed and jotted down at different times and in different contexts. Sec-

ondly, what strikes her most in the Russian novelist is his preoccupations with life in all its entirety and essence posing baffling questions about its real meaning, his skill in creating a very large variety of living characters, his integrity to his subject and art, his commendable power of conceiving and portraying a very vast realistic picture of life exquisitely studied with intensely poetic scenes and situations, and his indefatigable craftsmanship.

### Notes

1. Virginia Woolf accentuates the Russian novelist's preoccupation with soul and brotherhood. For instance, in the essay, "The Niece of an Earl," she lays stress upon "the immensity of the soul and upon the brotherhood of man." ( *The Common Reader*, Second Series [London: The Hogarth Press, 1965], p.216) .
2. Again, in another essay, "A Glance at Turgenev," she refers to the note of melancholy pervading the works of most of the Russian writers. ( *Books and Portraits*, ed. Mary Lyon [London: The Hogarth Press, 1977], p.107) .
3. Apropos of this, Joyce Cary remarks: "...the Kreutzer Sonata ... seemed so ludicrously wrong-headed about the whole matter of sex. In that book, you remember, a murderer tells how he killed his wife, out of jealousy; and blames the education of women 'for the marriage market.' It is penetrated throughout with Tolstoy's obsession with sex which ruled his senses and filled him with loathing, which gave him ( as Gorky tells us) so foul a tongue about women, and so acute a need, which he savagely resented, for their flesh." ( Prefatory Essay to *The Moonlight* [Carfax Edition; London: Michael Joseph, 1959], p.9) .

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## 6

## EXTREMES OF LITERARY CRITICISM — “OLD LIAR”, ONE OF “THE GREATEST WRITERS OF ALL TIME”: D.H. LAWRENCE'S DENUNCIATION OF, AND ADULATION FOR, LEO TOLSTOY

D.H. Lawrence, though strikingly original in his views on the variegated facets of life and art, is an extremist to some extent. For instance, he rejects intellectuality or cerebral consciousness for phallic consciousness, discards outright the conventional concepts of morality, character-creation and form for spontaneous, creative fullness of being and “religion of blood”, etc. No wonder, then, if he lacks, to a certain degree, in balance in his approaches to creative artists as well as art and its varied forms. This is well evident in his numerous observations on Tolstoy's mind and art, interspersed in many of his letters and non-fictional works written by him from time to time all through his brilliant but controversial literary career. What is specially notable in this connection is that though, unlike several of his illustrious contemporaries — viz. Henry James, E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and Virginia Woolf —, he has not written specifically any essay on Tolstoy, yet the inimitable Russian fictionist is one of the few authors who seized his mind and on whom he made many significant statements here and there and everywhere. Therefore, in order to understand his response to Tolstoy, we have to piece together his various, scattered cogitations on the Russian genius contained in his letters, “Study of Thomas Hardy”, “The Novel”, *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, “Preface” to his translation of Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, a couple of his poems, etc.

Lawrence's letters evince his deep interest in Tolstoy. As early as 23 December 1907 Lawrence, before he could publish anything worthwhile at all, told Louie Burrows in a letter that she would surely

find Tolstoy “interesting” and hence should “accept” him ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol. I, ed. James T. Boulton 42) . The next year in a letter written on 2 December 1908 he advised May Holbrook to read seriously Tolstoy, along with Balzac and Ibsen, as “they were great men all” ( 96) . Again, on 28 February 1909 he informed Louie Burrows that of late he read a lot of modern literature including that of Tolstoy ( 118) . During this period of his life, he was so much obsessed with Tolstoy's heroine Anna Karenina that in his confession of his passion for Frieda to his former beloved Jessie Chambers in June 1912, he referred to the Russian's immortal fictional character thus: “I only know I love Frieda... I can think of nothing but of Anna Karenina” ( 412) . In October 1912, about a year before the publication of his first important novel entitled *Sons and Lovers*, young Lawrence, along with his wife Frieda, carefully read *Anna Karenina* and observed in a light vein in his letter to Edward Garnett: “She ( Frieda) finds Anna very much like herself, only inferior — Vronsky is not much like me — too much my superior” ( 463) . Then, on 10 June 1913 he wrote to Edward Garnett to know about the progress of the latter's book on Leo Tolstoy that appeared in 1914 ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol.II, ed. George J. Zytaruck and James T. Boulton 21) . Again, he made a mention of Tolstoy's novels in October and November 1913 and referred to the several English translations of *The Kreutzer Sonata* which he wanted to read ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol.II 96, 101 and 114) . However, in a letter written to Catherine Carswell on 27 November 1916, he averred that Tolstoy and his great countrymen like Turgenev and Dostoevsky, along with Maupassant and Flaubert, were coarse and affected as compared to English artists and Fennimore Cooper; indeed, they were “so very *obvious* and coarse, beside the lovely nature and sensitive art of Fennimore Cooper or Hardy. It seems to me that our English art, at its best, is by far the subtlest and loveliest and most perfect in the world. But it is characteristic of a highly-developed nation to bow down to that which is more gross and raw and affected” ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol.III, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson 41) . Nevertheless, he was fully conscious of the greatness of Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky, and

therefore admitted in his letter to Catherine Carswell dated 2 December 1916 that the renowned Russians had meant and mattered immensely to him, but at the same time he believed that they were somewhat crude, uncivilized and insensitive in comparison with the celebrated British novelists whom he found finer, purer and 'ultimate'. To quote his own words:

Oh, don't think I would belittle the Russians. They have meant an enormous amount to me; Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky — mattered almost more than anything, and I thought them the greatest writers of all time. And now, with something of a shock, I realise a certain crudity and thick, uncivilized, insensitive stupidity about them, I realise how much finer and purer and more ultimate our own stuff is. ( 44)

Interestingly, only after twenty-one days of making the previous assertion, Lawrence, while commenting on Middleton Murry's novel in a letter sent to Gordon Campbell, described Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as "the best and greatest of men" ( 63) . In fact, he had an irresistible fascination for Tolstoy's writing all through his literary career. This is the reason why he, as he wrote to Cecily Lambert on 8 November 1919, "went to a Tolstoy play" which seemed to him "awful rubbish" ( 411) , felt extremely thankful to S.S. Koteliansky for sending him *Tolstoy's Love Letters* ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol.IV, ed. Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield 462) , and requested S.S Koteliansky on 21 December 1928 — even when he was dying of tuberculosis — to send him "a cheap copy of *What is Art?*" ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol. VII, ed. Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton 82) .

The above-cited comments of Lawrence on Tolstoy and others invite serious critical attention. As pointed out above, idiosyncratic extreme is evident in that they were earlier enormously important to him, mattered most to him and were "the greatest writers of all time", but only after a very short period they shocked him by their "crudity" and "stupidity"; these contradictory views confound the reader and amply display his confused, erratic critical faculty. Surely, it is an instance of imbalanced and careless criticism because if Tolstoy's realistic, comprehensive delineation of the contemporary Russian

society with all its sordidness is shocking to Lawrence, what should he say about the eminent Dickens's depiction of the crude semi-side of the Victorian world in his works? or about Fielding's picture of the vulgarity of life in his first two masterpieces? or about Hardy's indulgence in the uncivilized rustic life? or, for that matter, about his own portrayal of the rough and uncivilized colliery world in *Sons and Lovers* and the naked description of sexuality and primitivity in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Rainbow* which were banned for a considerable period and which disgusted T.S. Eliot so much so that he called him "uncouth" lacking in "intellectual and social training" and "disinherited of all the humaner achievements of civilized living" ( *After Strange Gods* 62-4) ?

Besides, this view of Lawrence about Tolstoy and others is in sharp contrast to that of his illustrious contemporary fictionist-critic, Virginia Woolf. While he finds the Russians crude, uncivilized and stupid in comparison with British novelists, Virginia Woolf declares Tolstoy and his compatriots, as well as James Joyce, to be saints and spiritualists and the contemporary established English fiction writers like Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy and H.G. Wells as materialists ( "Modern Fiction" 185 and 193) . She sees the works of Tolstoy and others embedded in the very essence of life, the soul or spirit of human existence, the inner being which Lawrence speaks of time and again in his expository writings. Moreover, when he asserts that "our own stuff" — i.e. British fiction — is "much finer and purer and more ultimate", he does not at all mention any English fictional work or fictionist to illustrate his comment, and thus makes only a sweeping remark without meaning any thing substantial and that too with reference to Tolstoy and fellow countrymen who, in the considered opinion of most of the scholars and critics, are the greatest writers of all time.

In a letter written to Henry Savage on 15 November 1913, Lawrence lashes out at Tolstoy and declares him a nihilist. At the beginning of it he states that he wanted to read *The Kreutzer Sonata* but could not do so till then because of its exorbitant price ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol. II 96) . Then in the last but one paragraph of the letter he expresses his staunch belief that sex is the

very spring of life, something that emanates from the eternal, and so the distancing from it means nothing but nihilism, the death of the being, the true essence of life. Inevitably, he condemns Tolstoy and Middleton Murry by calling them nihilists who plead for feeding the mind and soul at the expense of body, thus making the spirit “to live with a half corpse of a body.” He writes:

Sex is the fountain head, where life bubbles up into the person from the unknown; you conduct life further and further from sex — it becomes movement — expression — logic. The nihilists — *Tolstoy was one, or nearly one — never tried to love* — Middleton didn't, really — he was profoundly a nihilist — he should have uttered nihilism, but he was English, and hadn't the courage, so he kept one flag — Beauty. ( 102, italics added)

Indeed, Lawrence as literary critic, though certainly not a professional and devoted one like Coleridge, Arnold, F.R. Leavis or T.S. Eliot, is often, to a some extent, paradoxical and confusing, and his critical approach to Tolstoy is not an exception to it. His remarks about *The Kreutzer Sonata* bear a testimony to it. After several abortive attempts to procure and read this sensational novel, he at last could peruse it and found it quite fascinating. In the letter written to Edward Garnett on 2 December 1913, he pointed out that it interested him because it, like *Fumeurs d' Opium* by Jules Boissiere, was “the raw material of Art.” It fascinated him because it embodied the novelist's felt experience truthfully, but he opined that it was not a genuine work of art. He wrote: “That's why I liked *Kreutzer Sonata* — it is exactly what Tolstoi *thought* he experienced — and jolly truthful too — but not art. But it interests me” ( 114) . Lawrence's comment on Tolstoy's novel is not convincing; it is erratic and self-contradictory. He does not explain as what he means by “the raw material of art” and the finished material of art, and what is the difference between the two? Besides, he likes *The Kreutzer Sonata* as a fictional work, but does not recognize it as a piece of art. Thus, his critical opinion of the book is somewhat ridiculous and baffling to the serious reader/scholar of fiction.

In his criticism of Tolstoy and his fellow Russian fictionists —

Turgenev and Dostoevsky —, Lawrence, as he himself admitted in a very significant letter written to Edward Garnett on 5 June 1914, was influenced by the great Italian artist, Marinetti, a very important passage of whose “Manifesto teenico” ( *I Poeti Futuristi*) he translated as ““the profound intuitions of life added one to the other, word by word, according to their illogical conception, will give us the general lines of an intuitive physiology of matter”” ( 182) . Pinning full faith in what he translates from the Italian, he does not bother about physiology of matter, but “that which is physic — non-human, in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element — which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent” ( 182) . Unconventional in most of the matters, Lawrence, getting support from Marinetti, completely rejects the traditional belief in a certain moral scheme, which becomes the basis of his concept of art and morality. And this also is the basis of his adverse criticism of Tolstoy and the company, for these Russians, despite their extraordinary talents and capabilities, conceive a certain moral scheme in which all the characters, including the very exceptional ones, are to fit, and this makes the characters of Russian novelists dull, old-fashioned and lifeless. To cite Lawrence's words:

The certain moral scheme is what I object to. In Turgenev, and in Tolstoi, and in Dostoevski, the moral scheme into which all the characters fit — and it is nearly the same scheme — is, whatever the extraordinariness of the characters themselves, dull, old, dead. ( 182-83)

Lawrence further explains his point by affirming that he cares only about what a person is, physiologically, materially and inhumanly. That is, what he is as a phenomenon, representing “some greater, inhuman will”, rather than what he thinks or feels in consonance with “the human conception”. In other words, he is concerned with the true essence of life, the “radically — unchanged element” in each human being. He further explains his stand by asserting that “diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon”, and so he is concerned with carbon — the very essence of the thing, the whatness of life. Unfortunately, a novel usually focuses on “the history

of the diamond”, and not on the basic essence, carbon ( 183) . And according to Lawrence, Tolstoy, like most of the novelists, concentrates on the diamond or the coal, and not on carbon, that is, on the very essence — the whatness of a man or a woman. This comment on Tolstoy and other celebrated Russian fictionists presents sharp contrast to those of the several other British fictionist-critics like Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster and others who hold the Russians in high esteem simply because they primarily focus on the inner reality of life, the very soul of it. Thus, it is, indeed, very difficult to agree fully with Lawrence, though he is not only persuasive but also quite convincing and perceptive in his approach.

Lawrence, who loved Middleton Murry and admired his literary taste, was exceedingly annoyed by the latter's book on Fyodor Dostoevsky in which the author paid a glowing tribute to Russian literature, especially Tolstoy and Dostoevsky whom he described as the giants with whom ended an epoch of human mind. Lawrence was rudely shocked by his friend's concluding remark in the book, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Critical Study* :

In Russian literature alone can be heard the trumpet-note of a new world: other writers of other nations do no more than play about the feet of the giants who are Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, for even though the world knows it not, an epoch of the human mind came to an end in them. In them humanity stood on the brink of the revelation of a great secret. ( 263)

Middleton Murry's conclusion, which certainly smacks of adoration and adulation, naturally elicits Lawrence's indignant, cynical observation on Tolstoy and other Russian fictional celebrities. In his letter written to his friend, Murry, on 28 August 1916 he wonders how Murry and others can bear the old, traditional life, and then furiously lashes out at Tolstoy and others by asserting satirically that with them an age of the human mind may have ended,

... but humanity is capable of going on a very long way further yet, in a state of mindlessness — curse it. And you've got the cart before the horse. It isn't the being that must follow the mind, but the mind must follow the being. And if only the cursed cowardly world had the courage to follow its own being

with its mind, if it only had the courage to know what its own unknown *is*, its own desires and its own activities, it might get beyond to the new secret. But the trick is, when you draw somewhere near the 'brink of the revelation', to dig your head in the sand like the disgusting ostrich, and see the revelation there. Meanwhile, with their head in the sand of pleasing visions and secrets and revelations, they kick and squirm with their behinds, most disgustingly. I don't blame humanity for having no mind, I blame it for putting its mind in a box and using it as a nice little self-gratifying instrument. You've got to know, and know everything, before you 'transcend' into the 'unknown'. ( *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, Vol. II, 646)

Though Lawrence is blatantly bitter in his reaction to Murry's perception of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as the zenith of fiction writing, there is surely a grain of truth in his affirmation that the mind should transcend the being, and not the vice versa, and that one has to know everything before one endeavours to reach the “unknown”.

In the large corpus of Lawrence's expository writings, some pieces are invaluable for our present study, namely, “The Novel” and a few chapters from *Study of Thomas Hardy*, especially the first one. Though Lawrence has written four articles in all on the novel, the other three being — “Morality and the Novel”, “Why the Novel Matters” and “Surgery for the Novel — a Bomb” which contain his original, unconventional cogitations on the various aspects of the novel in general —, yet “The Novel”, which appeared in his book entitled *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine* in 1925, is indispensable for understanding his attitude towards Tolstoy as almost one third of it discusses Tolstoy and his works. After proclaiming vigorously that the novel “is the highest form of human expression so far attained” ( *D.H. Lawrence: A Selection from Phoenix* 161) , Lawrence holds that it essentially is and must be

1. Quick.
2. Interrelated in all its parts, vitally, organically.
3. Honourable. ( 169)

Importantly, while explaining these three great qualities of the novel, he refers to Tolstoy time and again.

Lawrence emphasizes “quickness” as embodied in characters, and he admires Tolstoy, along with Hardy and Verga, for his skill in creating characters saturated with quickness. By “quick” he means simply the assertive life-flame or God-flame, which is in everything, and is not merely an abstraction because it exists only in phenomenon, human beings and settings — it stands for their hidden mystery and inner dynamism. The novel, according to Lawrence, cannot exist without being “quick”; if it is not quick, it is bound to come to nothing, even though it is a best-seller. And this is the reason why it does not have any didactic absolute. Lawrence points out that the act of Vronsky's taking Anna Karenina in Tolstoy's famous novel is godly because it is quick. A character, Lawrence opines, ought to be “quick”, and this implies that he ought to be closely related to all the things around him — “snow, bed-bugs, sunshine, the phallus, trains, silk-hats, cats, sorrow, people, food, diphtheria, fuchsias, stars, ideas, God, tooth-paste, lightning, and toilet-paper. He must be in quick relation to all these things. What he says and does must be relative to them all” ( 166) . Lawrence illustrates his view from Tolstoy's work. He affirms that in *War and Peace*, Pierre is less quick and more dull than Prince Andre. The former has close relation to tooth-paste, people, foods, ideas, God, stars, sorrow, silk-hats, trams, etc. But he is not quickly related to snow and sunshine, toilet paper, cats, lightning, fuchsias, the phallus, etc. Tolstoy makes Pierre ‘so human’ and hence ‘so limited’. He is put in the masses so as to limit his individual potentialities ( 167) . Here we notice that in Lawrence's discussion of the three merits of the novel, the second actually overlaps the first. He maintains that everything in the novel must be in quick relation with all other things in it. He stresses the significance of the interrelation of all things in the novel, but he holds that this should be as natural as the flow of a stream. For then alone the novel can have its unique beauty, displaying that everything in it “is true in its own relationship, and no further” ( 168) . When all the parts of the novel are genuinely interrelated, there emerges a work of art, vital and organic whole.

A novel, in Lawrence's opinion, is honourable only when the novelist is true to everything in it — characters, didactic purpose,

inspiration, his own character, and other parts which constitute it. Judging Tolstoy from this standpoint, he finds *War and Peace* as thoroughly dishonourable because it has fat, diluted Pierre as a hero and presents him as a desirable and important man, though the fact is that he is not attractive and desirable even to the author himself. The novelist fails to see, what the novel clearly shows us, that Pierre is not wholly alive ( 169) . Consequently, he fails to create an honourable novel; he shows more sympathy for his characters than the reader is willing to grant.

Lawrence explains the element of honour further and illustrates his point from Tolstoy the man and his novels. He holds that Tolstoy is “a great creative artist” ( 169) and hence true to his characters; but as he is a person with a definite philosophy of his own, he is not honest to his character. Lawrence uses the word ‘character’ in a typical sense, meaning by it “the flame of a man, which burns brighter or dimmer, bluer or yellower or redder, rising or sinking or flaring according to the draughts of circumstance and the changing air of life, changing itself continually, yea remaining one single, separate flame, flickering in a strange world: unless it be blown out at last by too much adversity” ( 169-70) . Explaining, thus, what he implies by the word ‘character’, he affirms that had Tolstoy been honest to the flame in him, i.e. his own character, he would have easily perceived his dislike for the “fat, fuzzy Pierre”. But unfortunately, the Russian novelist, who is more than a character, a personality — i.e. “a self-conscious *I am*: being all that is left in us of a once-almighty Personal God” ( 170) —, intentionally proceeds to ‘lionize’ Pierre who is “a domestic sort of house-dog” ( 170) . This Lawrence regards as dishonourable on the part of Tolstoy because he deliberately refuses to be true to himself on account of his self-conscious personality which impels him to improve upon himself, to cite Lawrence's satirical, rather cynical expression, “by creeping inside the skin of a lamb; the doddering old lion that he was! Leo! Leon” ( 170) !

Lawrence is angry with Tolstoy, though not justly, because he has his own fixed notions and the Russian does not fit in them. He finds the Russian worshipping the human male, “man as a column of rapacious and living blood” ( 170) . He himself was very lecherous,

but would hurl thunderbolts of morality at others indulging in lust. His duplicity makes him dishonourable. Lawrence further points out that it is also apparent in his attitude towards socialism and Bolshevism. In his life as well as art he believed in the Absolute and this is not possible. Thus, Lawrence asserts: "Count Tolstoy had the last weakness of a great man: he wanted the absolute" ( 171) . But no man, or even no God that we can think of, can be absolute, can be absolutely right, good or lovable or loving; even Jesus Christ was good or right only relatively, and this is also true even of Rama. Inevitably, Tolstoy, because of this kind of attitude, is self-contradictory and presents dichotomy in his works which, in Lawrence's view, make him and his novels dishonourable, rendering them as flawed pieces of art. The novelist-critic observes:

But what a dishonourable thing for that claw-biting little Leo to do! And in his novels you see him at it. So that the papery lips of *Resurrection* whisper: 'Alas! I would have been a novel. But Leo spoiled me.' ( 171)

Thus, Lawrence believes that Tolstoy, though a great genius — he repeatedly uses this expression for him in his non-fictional works —, often fails as an artist. He is of the view that the novelist is a unique being and a class by himself. Naturally, everyone cannot be a novelist. A Christian or a theosophist or a Holy Roller cannot easily write a true novel; but on the other hand, a novelist can easily have in him a theosophist or a Christian or any kind of person. Surely, he is a distinguished individual, though he may not put up a fence and may allow any type of person to live in him ( 172) . The problem with Tolstoy, according to Lawrence, is that he cultivates a reformatory zeal and rigid notions, and imposes all this on his characters without bothering about the feasibility of it, and thus at the cost of sacrificing the flame-life pervading the universe. In a word, he lacks in honour — this word, used by Lawrence in a specific sense, has already been explained —, and this disgustingly mars a novel like *Resurrection*. Apropos of this, Lawrence states making his point crystal clear:

And the honour, which the novel demands of you, is only that you shall be true to the flame that leaps in you.

When that Prince in *Resurrection* so cruelly betrayed and abandoned the girl, at the beginning of her life, he betrayed and wetted on the flame of his own manhood. When, later, he bullied her with his repentant benevolence, he again betrayed and slobbered upon the flame of his waning manhood, till in the end his manhood is extinct, and he's just a lump of half-alive elderly meat. ( 173)

According to the oldest Pan-mystery, God is the flame of life permeating the entire universe. Whatever and whenever this flame may be, it is to be honoured and the novelist should be true to it. Since sex is flame which burns man's absolute and his ego but "is only relative" ( 173) , the novelist must be true to it also. Tolstoy, in Lawrence's opinion, is not honourable in this respect and is not able to rise above his ego and his belief in the absolute. Hence his spontaneous denunciation of Tolstoy: "But see old Leo Tolstoy wetting on the flame. As if even his wet were Absolute" ( 173) !

Lawrence opines that the third quality of the novel, i.e. it must be honourable, is of supreme importance inasmuch as it enables the reader to see the difference between what the artist has done with his material and what he might have done with it. Life is inseparable from art. If the artist is true to life, his work will surely reveal the quick and purge away all that is dull and dead in life. Thus, what is of vital significance is how far the artist has been true to it, and this can be measured by "honour", the third requisite of the novel. Notwithstanding his transcendent genius, Tolstoy, according to Lawrence, glaringly lacks in this quality, and therefore his fictional masterpieces like *War and Peace*, *Resurrection*, etc. are far from satisfactory as works of fictional art; they are not 'honourable' and doubtless damage "quick" or "life-flame".

The hiatus between what meaning the novel conveys to the reader and what meaning the novelist attempts to impose on the narrative, which he illustrates from Tolstoy's novels, leads Lawrence to infer that the novel and the novelist are quite often distinct from each other, and that the novel should be believed and not the novelist. Two of his remarks are very pertinent in this connection: "Let me hear what the novel says. As for the novelist, he is usually



a dribbling liar" ( 174) and "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale" ( "The Spirit of Place," *Studies in Classic American Literature* 8) . Importantly, Lawrence discriminates between the novel and the novelist to separate the patent meaning from the latent, and to distinguish between two kinds of the latent meaning, one less explicit than the other. "The dribbling liar" does not imply bad artistry or faultily executed intention; it simply means that the artist's intentions may be governed by various ideological and other pressures as in the case of Tolstoy who was obsessed with his Christian-socialism and the "foulness of flesh", but a genuine work of art rises above them and Tolstoy's novels, in Lawrence's view, fail in this respect. Moreover, a work of art embodies the artist's unconscious meaning which, according to Lawrence, is more real, urgent and potent than the conscious, intentional meaning which the artist knows and likes. The novel as a work of art does not have didactic absolutes, even if the artist intends to express a didactic purpose. In a novel everything is true in its own relationship and there lies its real beauty and truthfulness, and as has been pointed out above, Lawrence feels convinced that Tolstoy's novels are wanting in it, for he frequently indulges in absolute and presents sex as something "cheap and nasty", and thus fails miserably to present life-flame as honourable. Obviously, the remark that the novelist is "usually a dribbling liar" is about a novelist like Tolstoy and he is the writer discussed and demolished just before making this derogatory observation.

Lawrence downright debunks Tolstoy because the latter's works fail to exemplify the former's concept of morality. According to Lawrence, art is not purely aesthetic and entertaining, but inescapably moral. He holds that art should strive to change men and women and should give them moral sense. He avers:

The essential function of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not decorative, not pastime and recreation. But moral. The essential function of art is moral.

But a passionate, implicit morality, not didactic. A morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind. Changes the blood first. The mind follows later, in the wake. ( "Whitman," *Studies in Classic American Literature* 180)

Apparently, Lawrence draws a line of demarcation between implicit, passionate morality and didactic, explicit morality. In his opinion, a piece of art is not immoral, if it has any dominant idea or purpose; but it is so if the artist puts his thumb in the scale to make it support or uphold his didactic purpose which is usually antagonistic to his passionate inspiration. Lawrence brings out the difference between the "grosser or lesser" morality and the "finer or greater" morality. By "grosser morality" he means the conventional, institutionalized system of society, grasped and formulated by human consciousness. On the contrary, "finer morality" implies the mysterious and unknowable moral forces of life and nature, or of the universe itself, which are eternal, unalterable and invincible. The great artist, in Lawrence's view, is primarily concerned with "finer morality", and not with "grosser morality"; he does not replace immorality by morality, but replaces "grosser morality" by "finer morality" ( "Art and Morality," *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence* 526) .

Judging from the standpoint of his concept of morality, briefly enumerated above, Lawrence finds Tolstoy highly dissatisfying and appalling. He holds that most of the great novelists have didactic purpose, as Tolstoy has his "Christian-socialism", Hardy his pessimism and Flaubert his intellectual despair. However, the didactic purpose is not a healthy thing in a novel, though even at its worst, as in Tolstoy and Flaubert, it "cannot put to death the novel" ( "The Novel" 162) . Lawrence does not see any distinction between a writer's philosophy and his purpose because a philosophy is only a purpose on a higher level ( 162) . But what really matters in a novel is that the purpose should be large enough, and should not contradict and kill the emotional inspiration of the novelist. Unfortunately, even in a great novelist like Tolstoy, according to Lawrence, we find philosophy and inspiration at cross-purposes, and this undoubtedly makes his and other such fictionists' books very unwholesome. Tolstoy's fault is to let his purpose become explicit in his novels, despite his efforts on the contrary. Little wonder Lawrence assails the Russian's masterpieces like *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* on this ground in the following severe manner:

Vronsky sinned, did he? But also the sinning was a

consummation devoutly to be wished. The novel makes that obvious: in spite of old Leo Tolstoy. And the would-be-pious Prince in *Resurrection* is a muff, with his piety that nobody wants or believes in. ( 162)

This leads Lawrence to assert that the greatness of the novel lies in the fact that it does not let even a great novelist like Tolstoy “tell didactic lies and put them over” ( 162) ; as a matter of fact, a great novel necessarily avoids didactic lies. He analyses incisively Vronsky's relationship with Anna Karenina and their tragic end. He holds that everyone is bound to feel very happy when Vronsky gets Anna Karenina. And when it is so, the so-called social sin in their relationship is immaterial and redundant — it should not bother or disturb anybody. Apparently, on seeing the situation impartially, one discerns the cause of their tragedy in their fear of society; the devil causing their ruin is society, and not phallic urge and fulfilment. Their sin lies in their cowardice — their fear of society —, and not in their sincere and genuine passion of love. Since the novel, *Anna Karenina*, lays it bare and the novelist fails to conceal, or present artistically, the imposition of his moral intention on the protagonists, the book exposes the didactic falsehood or lie. Inevitably, it engenders irrepressible indignation in Lawrence and impels him to assail Tolstoy and his false, perverse didacticism with a stream of invective:

The novel makes it obvious, and knocks all old Leo's teeth out. ‘As an officer I am still useful. But as a man, I am a ruin,’ says Vronsky — or words to that effect. Well what a shrunk, collapsing as a man and a male, and remaining merely as a social instrument; an ‘officer’, God love us! — merely because people at the opera turn backs on him! As if people's backs weren't preferable to their faces, anyhow!

And old Leo tries to make out it was all because of the phallic sin. Old liar! Because where would any of Leo's books be, without the phallic splendour? And then to blame the column of blood, which really gave him all his life riches! The Judas! Cringe to a mangy, bloodless Society, and try to dress up that dirty old Mother Grundy in a new bonnet and face-powder of Chistian-socialism. Brothers indeed! Sons of a castrated

Father!

The novel itself gives Vronsky a kick in the behind, and knocks old Leo's teeth out, and leaves us to learn. ( 162-63)

True, in *Anna Karenina*, the didactic purpose or moral intention and the passionate inspiration are alienated from each other; Tolstoy's didactic purpose is not big enough and it quarrels with his passionate inspiration which seems to succumb to the stale old, social purpose or morality. Discarding completely the conventional, communal morality of the type Tolstoy presents in this novel — “pernicious skin-and-grief form of morality” —, Lawrence rightly affirms: “The old, communal morality is like a leprosy, a white sickness: the old, anti-social, individualist morality is alone on the side of life and heath” ( “From *Study of Thomas Hardy*” 210) .

Lawrence denigrates Tolstoy on the ground that the latter does not offer us a frank criticism of the morality he delineates in his works, particularly *Anna Karenina*; on the contrary, he rather over-emphasizes the moral purpose in it. Lawrence holds that a good work of art should not merely adhere to a certain morality, but should also present its candid criticism because morality is not of permanent value, while art is of eternal value:

... all morality is of temporary value, useful to its times.

But Art must give a deeper satisfaction ....

Yet every work of art adheres to some system of morality. But if it be really a work of art, it must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres. ( 214)

Lawrence severely criticizes Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *The Resurrection*, for he finds in them an overemphasis on morality which may appear to be actuality but is not “living life” in the true sense. He opines that unfortunately Tolstoy and Hardy are concerned more with the lesser human morality than with the greater morality. They submit their works to the grosser morality, and their characters, unlike Shakespeare's great tragic heroes and Sophocles' Oedipus who are depicted battling dauntlessly against the puissant moral forces of nature, are shown fighting fiercely the man-made moral laws and succumbing to them. Apropos of these two celebrated novelists' unsatisfactory treatment of morality, Lawrence states:

... in Hardy and Tolstoy the lesser, human morality, the mechanical system is actively transgressed, and holds, and punishes the protagonist, whilst the greater morality is only passively, negatively transgressed, it is represented merely as being present in background, in scenery, not taking any active part, having no direct connexion with the protagonist. Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth set themselves up against, or find themselves set up against, the unfathomed moral forces of nature, and out of this unfathomed force comes their death. Whereas Anna Karenina, Eustacia, Tess, Sue, and Jude find themselves up against the established system of human government and morality, they cannot detach themselves, and are brought down. Their real tragedy is that they are unfaithful to the greater unwritten morality, which would have bidden Anna Karenina be patient and wait until she, by virtue of greater right, could take what she needed from society; would have bidden Vronsky detach himself from the system, become an individual, creating a new colony of morality with Anna.... ( 205-6)

Then, Lawrence denounces Tolstoy as the latter employs his metaphysic for self-justification and self-denial. In fact, a novelist should not indulge in evolving a metaphysic of self-justification or self-denial, and should not judge the world by his metaphysic. Instead of applying the world to his metaphysic, he should apply his metaphysic to the world. Lawrence sees Tolstoy as the glaring instance of this faulty application of his metaphysic. Of course, an artist, while viewing the universe, must view it in the light of a theory, and hence "every novel must have the background or the structural skeleton of some theory of being, some metaphysic" ( 217) . But the metaphysic should not be dominant in a work; rather, it must always be subservient to the artistic purpose lest it should make the novel a treatise. Lawrence points out that Tolstoy is a patent example of the writer's wrong application of his metaphysic. In his youth, the great Russian was disgusted with his flesh because of his profligacy. Naturally, he discards himself, his own being in favour of his metaphysic and denies the Father — i.e. flesh — so as to avoid the admission of his own failure. And this, according to Lawrence, makes

... all the later part of his life a crying falsity and shame. Reading the reminiscences of Tolstoy, one can only feel shame at the way Tolstoy denied all that was great in him, with vehement cowardice. He degraded himself infinitely, he perjured himself far more than did Peter when he denied Christ. Peter repented. But Tolstoy denied the Father, and propagated a great system of his recusancy, elaborating his own weakness, blaspheming his own strength. 'What difficulty is there in writing about how an officer fell in love with a married woman?' he used to say of his *Ann Karenina*; 'there's no difficulty in it, and, above all, no good in it.'

Because he was mouthpiece to the Father in uttering the law of passion, he said there was no difficulty in it, because it came naturally to him. Christ might just as easily have said, there was no difficulty in the Parable of the Sower, and no good in it, either, because it flowed out of him without effort. ( 217-18)

Like Tolstoy, Hardy also tries to fit the events and experiences of life into the theory of being, and he makes a very clumsy effort to do it. He rises to great heights and becomes true to himself only when he puts aside his metaphysic which always obstructs when he thinks of people. However, Lawrence points to one thing very remarkable about Tolstoy and Hardy: with their natural instincts and gifts as great creative artist, they are able to comprehend the great truth that "The theory of knowledge, the metaphysic of the man, is much smaller than the man himself" ( 219) .

Lawrence, again, refers to Tolstoy to explain clearly his idea of morality in the novel. In the brilliant essay titled "Translator's Preface to *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Giovanni Verga", he states that Tolstoy is appalling in that he perversely hates the spontaneous passion and instinctive pride in man. This is the reason why he takes malicious pleasure in making the later Vronsky pitiable and abject because the robust passionate male in young Vronsky is detestable to the author. Small wonder Lawrence derisively and sadonically observes in this regard: "Tolstoy cut off his own nose to spite his face. He envied the reckless passionate male with a

carrying envy, because he must have felt himself in some way wanting in comparison" ( 261) . However, Lawrence is perceptive and correct in his assessment of Tolstoy the moralist and Tolstoy the artist; he draws a clear-cut, insightful demarcation between the two different selves of the Russian fictionist. While he condemns him outright as a moralist and an individual by calling him perverse, he does not fail to perceive in him a healthy artist worshipping the very essence of life — the spontaneous, passionate pure life — like the great , inimitable Sicilian artist Giovanni Verga whose book entitled *Cavalleria Rusticana* he eulogized enthusiastically and dispassionately. Lawrence explains all this effectively in his incisive comments on Tolstoy and his characters, Vronsky and Anna:

It was only as a moralist and a personal being that Tolstoy was perverse. As a true artist, he worshipped, as Verga did, every manifestation of pure, spontaneous, passionate life, life kindled to vividness. As a perverse moralist with a sense of some subtle deficiency in himself, Tolstoy tries to insult and to damp out the vividness of life. Imagine any great artist making the vulgar social condemnation of Anna and Vronsky figure as divine punishment! Where now is the society that turned its back on Vronsky and Anna? Where is it? And what is its condemnation worth, today? ( 262)

True, Lawrence considers Tolstoy's books, especially *Anna Karenina*, very relevant and vital as they often show how natural passion and sexuality become destructive because of the modern imbalanced culture. But he accentuates the fact that Tolstoyism, his ideal of Christian brotherhood, is unhealthy and unvital, and hence discardable. In the book titled *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, he makes his point clear in these words:

Better Anna Karenina and Vronsky a thousand times than Natasha and that porpoise of a Pierre.... Better Vronsky's final statement: "As a soldier I am still some good. As a man I am a ruin" — Better that than Tolstoy and Tolstoyism and that beastly peasant blouse the old man wore. Better passion and death than any more of these "isms" .... But still — we might live — mightn't we? ( 220-21)

Certainly a minor piece of criticism, Lawrence's review of Tolstoy's novel, *Resurrection*, is significant and deserves some consideration because it embodies his conviction in the resurrection of the body, of the flesh as opposed to Tolstoy's belief in this regard. Also, this review shows his patent technique of explaining his own metaphysics by placing it in juxtaposition of that of some other great writer who was Hardy in his early career and Tolstoy in his later days. Since Lawrence has unflinching faith in the resurrection of body, he attacks Tolstoy the author of *Resurrection* for worshipping a dead Christ. He asserts that the Russian presents Christ as a God of death, and not of life and flesh, and hence the British novelist-critic feels as if "the stone was rolled upon him" ( *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence* 737) .

Lawrence speaks of Tolstoy in a couple of his poems, of which the one entitled "Now It's Happened" deserves a special mention here. This poem is highly critical of Tolstoy. Lawrence condemns Lenin and Stalin for their type of radical socialism, commonly known as Bolshevism. He believes that Tolstoy, who could create memorable, great rebels like Anna Karenina and Vronsky, might have saved Russia from Lenin and Stalin's undesirable, unpalatable Bolshevism. No wonder he calls him "a traitor", and blames him and Dostoevsky squarely for the ruin of Russia under Lenin's Bolshevism. His scathing attack on Tolstoy in exquisite poetic mode is worth citing as it cannot be rendered effectively in adequate prose:

One cannot now help thinking  
how much better it would have been  
if Vronsky and Anna Karenina  
had stood up for themselves, and seen  
Russia across her crisis,  
instead of leaving it to Lenin.

The big, flamboyant Russia  
might have been saved, if a pair  
of rebels like Anna and Vronsky  
had blasted the sickly air  
of Dostoevsky and Tchekov,

and spy-government everywhere.

But Tolstoi was a traitor  
to the Russia that needed him most,  
the clumsy, bewildered Russia  
so worried by the Holy Ghost.  
He shifted his job on to the peasants  
and landed them all on toast.

.....

So our goody-good men betray us  
and our sainty-saints let us down,  
and a sickly people will slay us  
if we touch the sob-stuff crown  
of such martyrs; while Marxian tenets  
naturally take hold of the town.

Too much of the humble Willy wet-leg  
and the holy can't-help-it touch,  
till you've ruined a nation's fibre  
and they loathe all feeling as such,  
and want to be cold and devilish hard  
like machines — and you can't wonder much. —

( D.H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems*, Vol.II 271-72)

Lawrence articulates the same belief in the article “The Novel” in equally effective prose. He laments that a great man like Leo Tolstoy could let “old-Adam manhood” be improved upon by the so-called reformers, i.e. Bolsheviks, “who all feel themselves short of something, and therefore live by spite, that at last there's nothing left but a lot of shells of men, improving themselves steadily emptier and emptier, till they rattle with words and formulae, as if they'd swallowed the whole encyclopedia of socialism” ( “The Novel,” *D.H. Lawrence: A Selection from Phoenix* 170) . Lawrence is shocked to see that Tolstoy, who was a devotee of “the human male, man as a column of rapacious and living blood” ( 170) , could bear the Russians being ludicrously changed into Bolsheviks. The creator

of great rebels like Anna Karenina, Vronsky and others, could timidly and willingly accept Bolshevism — the violent overthrow of Capitalism by the Russian Communism/Marxism headed by Lenin and Stalin. Comparing Tolstoy to a lion and the Bolsheviks' Russia to a lamb, Lawrence lambasts the old, experienced Tolstoy thus:

When the lion swallows the lamb, fluff and all, he usually gets a pain, and there's a rumpus. But when the lion tries to force himself down the throat of the huge and popular lamb — a nasty old sheep, really — then it's a phenomenon. Old Leo did it: wedged himself bit by bit down the throat of woolly Russia. And now out of the mouth of the Bolshevik lambkin still waves an angry, mistaken tufted leonine tail, like an agitated exclamation mark. ( 170)

Though unfairly harsh to Tolstoy and at times abusive too, it may be said in Lawrence's defence that he believes that only a great writer or a great work entails criticism and no good critic can or should think of attacking an ordinary author or an ordinary work. This he makes explicit in his remark about a minor novel by Hardy: “The spirit being small, the complaint is narrow” ( *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence* 435) . And we know it very well through Lawrence's numerous remarks, discussed above, that he considers Tolstoy a very great genius, an outstanding creative artist and proclaims *Anna Karenina* to be his favourite novel. As Jessie Chambers records, in his youth he regarded *Anna Karenina* as “the greatest novel in the world” ( *A Personal Record* 114) , and held that Tolstoy's women were greater than Shakespeare's as he once told Frieda's son ( *Composite Biography*, Vol.III 113) . What I feel, after having a careful and comprehensive perusal of Lawrence's variegated statements about Tolstoy and his works, is that he oscillates between admiration and condemnation, and wholehearted acceptance and downright denunciation of Tolstoy the writer. As a matter of fact, he has a love-hate literary relationship with the illustrious Russian. And that is why, on the one hand he holds him in high esteem and cannot but refer to him and his writings in his discussion of art or artist, the novel or the novelist, and an individual fictional work or an individual fictionist; but on the other hand he

bitterly criticizes him time and again, goes to the extreme extent of using such disparaging expressions as “dishonourable”, “old liar”, “claw-biting little Leo”, “The novel... knocks old Leo's teeth out”, etc., and passes strictures on him like a “hanging judge”.

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## 7

### JOYCE CARY'S CRITICAL RESPONSE TO LEO TOLSTOY'S ART AND IDEAS

This chapter is intended to examine thoroughly Joyce Cary's response/ reaction to Tolstoy's fictional art and ideas, for the celebrated twentieth-century British novelist himself admits that the great Russians — Tolstoy and Dostoevsky — are his masters along with Hardy, James and Conrad ( Cary, Prefatory Essay to *Aissa Saved* 10) and he also refers to Tolstoy and *Anna Karenina* in two different contexts during the conversation with *Paris Review* interviewers ( “An Interview with Joyce Cary,” *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 52) . Cary made his debut as a fictionist in 1930s with the publication of *Aissa Saved* in 1932 and gained recognition as an outstanding fictional writer in 1940s when his novel *The Horse's Mouth* was published in England as well as in America and was filmed in America. In 1950s he emerged into eminence not only as a fictionist but also as an art-theorist when in 1952 he was requested to deliver three lectures at Oxford in Hilary Term on “The Novel as Truth” and in 1956 to give the six Clark lectures which appeared in 1958 under the title *Art and Reality*. Small wonder Andrew Wright proclaimed him a giant among the twentieth-century novelists ( *Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels* 13) , and Walter Allen eulogized him by accentuating his Protean quality, his Shakespearean objectivity ( *Joyce Cary* 9) . What I stress is that though as a fictionist he may not be as great as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and several others belonging to the twentieth century, he is unmistakably unique among the novelists in the English language in that he not only made perceptive and incisive critical statements about Tolstoy the writer but also reacted sharply to his idea of love and marriage with special reference to women as presented in *The Kreutzer Sonata* by writing the remarkable novel *The Moonlight* ( Cary, Prefatory Essay to *The Moonlight*

9) . Before and after Cary, many renowned British novelists, who were contemporaries and successors of the illustrious Russian fictionist, expressed their cogitations on his fiction, but none of them could produce a creative work in response or reaction to his creative writing. However, the present essay is devoted exclusively to Cary's critical appraisal of Tolstoy's mind and art, and will not treat, for want of space, his novel *The Moonlight* written in reaction to Tolstoy's concept of man-woman relationship and the conditioning of woman by the society in this regard as embodied artistically in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Joyce Cary makes numerous observations on Tolstoy's art and ideas in his prefatory essays prefixed to the Carfax Edition of his novels, in his conversations and interviews, in some of his essays contributed to variegated magazines, and, above all, in the Clark lectures published in book form entitled *Art and Reality*. As a matter of fact, he, time and again, illustrates his ideas about art and the novel from Tolstoy. I shall here collect, cohere and critically examine them in order to arrive at his assessment of Tolstoy as artist and thinker.

In his close perusal of Tolstoy's writings, Cary discerns that the Russian, like every great artist, begins with his intuitional discovery of something new about the world. Intuition, a sudden "sub-conscious recognition of the real" ( Cary, *Art and Reality* 14) , imparts to the artist the direct knowledge/ feeling of the world as it is, and this is a kind of joyful discovery to him. But he does not comprehend this fully and so he approaches his intuitional discovery and reflects on it in order to grasp it, and here he experiences great difficulty because of the gap between intuition and expression. Apropos of this problem confronted by Tolstoy, like any genuine artist, Cary writes:

Tolstoy tells us in his diary how he sat for a long time trying to express his feeling; but he could not find the right words. What is interesting to us is that Tolstoy's feeling — the intuition — remained to be examined, to be compared with the various expressions which were rejected in turn because they failed to be accurate. ( 26)

Indeed, every writer, like Tolstoy, is invariably seized with a directly intuited impression of feeling or idea, some record of the sub-conscious, and bafflingly marks the problematic passage from intuition to reflection, from the knowledge of the real to the expression of it in a suitable form; he has to translate artistically one state of existence into another, the purely sensuous impression into a truly critical and reflective form. Cary affirms that every writer, like Tolstoy, has to look for words to express his intuitive feeling and his reaction to it, and succeeds in it only after a lot of continuous efforts. Thus "Tolstoy tells us that he found the task so exasperating that he wanted to get up and walk away. There is no short cut across this gap" ( 27) . To a sincere artist like Tolstoy, his intuition comes to him from a world of permanent, objective forms, and it moves him in a certain way because he is endowed with a special sensibility and what Tolstoy, as his diary hints at, "was looking for was not his own idea of things, but the exact impression they had made on him" ( 30) . And we clearly mark that Tolstoy was "impatiently trying to find out exactly what his feeling, his intuition, was" ( 85) . A great artist as he was, he was worried not only about the gap between intuition and concept, but also between concept — the initial raw statement — and its working out in a narrative with a suitable form.

Cary, by implication, points to the greatness of Tolstoy as an artist when he explains, illustrating from his books like *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, that the Russian master, like Henry James, has always an intuition ( which Henry James calls 'germ') , a definite theme to explore and communicate artistically in his novel. Cary, thus, asserts that Tolstoy got the intuition for Anna's tragedy ( her committing suicide on the railway track) upon which the novel is centred, not from the suicide committed by his friend's mistress on the railway line which profoundly afflicted him, as most of the people believe, but from the Turkish embroidery on his dressing-gown which he was wearing on one fine morning. While noticing the delicacy and precision of the embroidery on the gown by some unknown woman, he suddenly realised that the mind or world of woman was vastly different from that of man and this formed the real basis of *Anna Karenina*. It dawned upon Tolstoy that Providence had assigned

different natures and responsibilities to women and men. And as such "Woman's function was social, to be sister, wife, mother, nurse, the centre of family life, the builder and keeper of its sacred values" ( 107) . In Tolstoy's view, Providence has endowed man with the power of love and response to love which is the only essential clue to good life, and hence a society, which is not based on love, is unnatural and evil. In fact, as Cary states, "Tolstoy's religious training enforced his intense intuition of family love; it explained the value of love in the world, it gave his religious idea very deep roots in a personal experience of the real, finally it gave him his theme, that is to say, the theme had its tap-root in a first profound experience" ( 105) . Little wonder he considers the artificial life of society, which is poles opposite of the country/ village life, as basically corrupt. Anna suffers terribly and meets her doom or tragic end because she goes against Nature's law for womanhood by leaving her husband and child for a lover, and this naturally is bound to destroy not only the happiness of her family — her husband and child — but also of her lover and ultimately her own once for all. Cary is correct when he affirms that Tolstoy is completely different from Hardy in that while for the latter blind Fate was the ruling master of human tragedy, "for Tolstoy it was the nature of things, the laws of being. Anna represented womanhood. She broke God's law for womanhood, and was therefore not only the source of evil to others but was herself terribly punished" ( 108) .

Cary discusses Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* to demonstrate further how the Russian writer is usually haunted by his theme so much so that it becomes an overt message verging on pure propaganda, and yet the deft artist in him exposes it in an artistic form which makes it forceful and arresting. In this novel he emphasizes that women are brought up and trained for marriage by teaching them from childhood "to exploit their sex that marriage itself is merely a sexual conspiracy or a sexual battle and that from these causes arise all the evils of society" ( 109) . Cary opines that though the entire novel is simply a propaganda and is unconvincing, yet he makes it effective and moving by putting it into the mouth of the central figure, the wife-murderer in the narrative, and makes us realise

that the narrator's act of murdering his wife becomes an obsession with him and is certainly true to his nature and life. We feel that all this is nonsense and is only an excuse of a highly stupid, jealous person for killing his wife, and yet this is true as it is in accordance with the nature of the protagonist and the situation in which the characters are placed. Obviously, Cary passes his final judgment as follows:

The book gives us a fine picture of that everlasting type, the neurotic, frustrated or merely selfish and stupid person, who puts upon society the reproach of his own failure. So at the very time we are saying "What nonsense", we are also saying, 'How true to the man — how true to the situation'.

*The Kreutzer Sonata* is completely successful as a work of art because, although it preaches, the message it is meant to give has been entirely assimilated into its form. The whole thing is an experience with the feeling appropriate to that form. ( 109-10)

True, a writer must neither make his theme light nor subordinate it to any other issue even if his theme has nothing to do with a general or great truth of life; his theme is his personal truth and if he relegates it to a subordinate position, he falsifies "the truth of his feeling" ( 115) and is sure to lose the power of expressing it. Thus in a novel with a significant meaning and form, the theme is dominant and the novelist invents his whole story to develop, underline and convey it. But as the novels of Tolstoy demonstrate, Cary says, "the more comprehensive a novel in scope, in width of scene, the more it loses in power and significance" ( 115) because its focus on the meaning, the theme, is diversified and distorted. This is the reason why, according to Cary, "*Anna Karenina* has much more power than *War and Peace*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* has more than *Anna Karenina*" ( 115) . The fact is that the truth embodied in a novel is in consonance with the power of its communication; the truth, the meaning, presented in the novel, is a felt one soaked in values, a personal one as the whole truth cannot be known and hence cannot be communicated.

Cary points out that Tolstoy, like all true philosophers and artists,



attempts to explain the meaning and nature of art to suit his picture of things and in doing so, as he himself tells us, took fifteen years before he could write his well thought-out treatise, *What Is Art? And Essays on Art*. A “means of intercourse between man and man” ( Tolstoy, *What Is Art? And Essays on Art* 12) and thus bringing them closer, art, according to Tolstoy, must have a moral purpose otherwise it is bad art. Obviously, his concept of art rejects completely the aesthetic theory of art for art's sake which is primarily concerned with aesthetic pleasure, without having a definite meaning. Bracketing Tolstoy with Ruskin and supporting him wholeheartedly in this regard, Cary asserts:

... Tolstoy and Ruskin declared that art is bad unless it has a moral purpose. And this has force too, because it disparages the theory of art for art's sake. It gives us the truth that it is only the most trivial arts that even pretend to serve a purely aesthetic end. Even hats are meant to attract attention. All great art has a meaning beyond itself. ( *Art and Reality* 18)

Inevitably, Cary opines that every real artist, like Tolstoy, Dickens, Hardy, James or Conrad, deals with morals. By “morals” he means conduct of man leading to happiness or misery, that is, what people do and the reason and result of their action. Little wonder he makes the sweeping, forceful statement: “The greatest writers of the world are just those who take the greatest interest in morals: it is because of that they are so exciting to read. Think of Dickens, Tolstoy, Hardy, and Conrad” ( Cary, “A Novelist and His Public” 36) . Emphasizing the point further, Cary states that arts may differ in their moral effects, but none of them can exclude morality, and of all arts, the written arts, except the purely factual, take a moral problem as their meaning. The written arts deal with human action, and hence what men think and do are as important for a writer as what they are. The writer is concerned with action and events, and he mainly creates a world of action. Consequently, he has to deal with motive, with morality. He invents his plots and characters to give us knowledge of a world in which men are deeply concerned with morals. He offers his meaning to the reader for his final judgment. Every author, whether Tolstoy, Aeschylus or Dickens, does this.

True, the writer creates for us a whole meaning which is essentially moral. His meaning, though particular to himself, expresses a moral truth of wide appeal. In order to accentuate the validity of this truth, Cary refers to Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy and Marcel Proust. He holds that much of Jane Austen's greatness is due to her command of a clear moral idea ( *Art and Reality* 53) , and that a great novelist like Tolstoy not only presents morality in the novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but also uses the book as the vehicle of message or propaganda, which he makes highly moving by devising a suitable form for it ( 109-10) . Tolstoy's writings lead Cary to infer that all artists invariably preach:

We are told that novelists must not preach. This is nonsense. All serious artists preach — they are perfectly convinced of the truth as they see it, and they write to communicate that truth. ( 109)

Indeed, Cary's emphasis on the importance of morality in fiction is the result of his discernment of great writers' ( as different as Tolstoy, D.H. Lawrence, Dante or the author of *Everyman*) obsession with their themes embedded in morals — the sense of right and wrong — and message ( 158) .

No doubt morality is indispensable for a good artistic creation, but the artist should not preach openly. That is why, Cary avers that since Tolstoy in *Resurrection* fails to conceal his intention of instructing the reader, the book engenders strong dislike. However, it does not mean that the artist should not convey a message and that he should only tell a story leaving the message to preachers; as a matter of fact, art has a message and “can and must be used for any kind of communication, including instruction” ( Cary, “The Way a Novel Gets Written” 6) . Cary, thus, endeavours to demonstrate that Tolstoy's novel fails not because of its message, but because it is a piece of bad art — viz. it fails to give a message couched in experience. Good art should contain an implied statement of belief. That is, it should certainly preach, but should do so implicitly as it “is not the place for propaganda; it must state a case, but it must not give verdict” ( Cary, “My First Novel” 638) . The reader of a novel does not relish sermons or judgments, and does not read

it for information or instruction. Therefore, the artist, unlike Tolstoy, should accomplish the task of conveying moral ideas by cajoling and bribing the pleasure-seeking reader and by giving the moral ideas the form of felt-experience.

Cary refers to Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Resurrection* and Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karmazov* in order to explain the novelist's problem of stating the case comprehensively or presenting an argument in detail, for in doing so he only makes an intellectual appeal and breaks the emotional continuity of the narrative/ the reader — viz. the unhampered emotional experience of the reader — which is disastrous for his art as it is very annoying to the reader. This is applicable even to great characters like Tolstoy's Peter in *War and Peace*, and Cary lucidly puts his viewpoint as follows:

This is even if one invents 'raisonneurs,' characters like Peter in *War and Peace*, to discuss philosophy; for a character able to discuss fine points ( which is what you need to get any value out of him) however real in himself, and firmly placed in the action of the book, if he states the case, will at once come out of it and appear like a lecturer on the platform. For the reader perceives at once that that is what he is for, and is rightly offended. And the more carefully one hides such a purpose, the more offensive it is. Ingenuity, in fact, is always disastrous, if it is meant to deceive. ( Cary, Prefatory Essay to *Castle Corner* 5-6)

However, Cary admits that great writers like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky put forward social philosophy through their creations and do so effectively. In this regard, he considers Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* commendable in that they present a case, and not the case, and argue and portray everything from one particular point of view. Apropos of this Cary affirms:

But these great books do not state the case, they weave a spell, they leave out all those qualifications, those relativities which, in the real world, affect conduct and opinion. They state not the case, but a case; they see everything from one angle; they are 'true' only for their own characters in that situation, carefully chosen and limited to drive home one moral slogan,

and excluding all these complex issues which in real life would make it possible to say 'but Aloysha's solution is wish-fulfilment' ( 6)

Cary considers the delineation of social philosophy in the manner of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky very difficult and artistically hazardous for an artist, and therefore he abandons his original plan of showing the revolutions of history and philosophy during the period of 1880-1935 in a vast work in three or four volumes, and writes only one novel *Castle Corner* in which he creates characters and leaves them to act without indulging in social philosophy.

Cary perceives the distinction between moral and aesthetic judgements in Tolstoy, particularly in his much debated novel, *The Kruetzer Sonata*. He finds it aesthetically brilliant, but morally all wrong. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to split the personality of a man into moral and aesthetic segments, for the moral judgement in a man is a secondary intuition which becomes part of the 'intuitive character'. The whole man reacts to his physical surroundings as well as to the world of coherent value created by art. According to Cary, the aesthetic and the moral sensibilities are inalienable; the moral judgement is an invariable ingredient of every aesthetic judgement of art. While discussing Tolstoy's novel, *The Kruetzer Sonata*, he points out that the material has been handled with dignity and distinction. In spite of so much violence, it has moral attributes and a moral taste inasmuch as it has no exaggerations and no falsities. When one compares this novel with another tale of violence, *No Orchids for Miss Brandish*, one clearly sees the difference that is not purely aesthetic but also moral. This makes Cary to state:

One cannot, in fact, split up the personality of a man — the sensible character of his being — into the aesthetic and the moral.

It is the whole man, the total sensibility that intuits the world. That world is a world of ordered meaning, of coherent value as given by art. ( *Art and Reality* 136)

Cary feels that it is by creating a world of action that the writer presents his moral meaning to us, and Tolstoy does not do so. The

reason is that we “do not discover the meaning of this world as a concept, but as a form of moral experience” ( 152) . Hence the vital quality of a writer's art lies in giving the experience, not the concept, and Tolstoy fails in this respect in *The Kreutzer Sonata*.

Cary extols Tolstoy for imparting formal excellence to his novels by exploring and communicating his theme. Importantly, he is obsessed with his theme, which is naturally assertive in his book and everything else is subservient to it. Cary repeatedly maintains, and rightly does so, that Tolstoy could succeed in writing a masterpiece of formal perfection like *Anna Karenina* because he was haunted by his theme. Undoubtedly it is a great novel since every detail belongs to the formal unity of the author's meaning. In about ten chapters, he has organized a race meeting to bring all the characters into play. But all these chapters, though tedious in details, move the story forward to illustrate the theme.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, *Anna Karenina* possesses a highly commendable form because even the ten successive chapters, devoted to the delineation of a race meeting, contribute to the development of theme and reveal the essential changes in the characters — the new dimensions between Alexei and Anna, between Anna and Vronsky, and Anna's telling her husband that she hates him in a fit of agitation due to Vronsky's fall during the race, etc. Tolstoy's diary discloses his fear that the race, delineated in ten chapters, would be an anti-climax lest it should provide some dramatic climax to shed new light upon the central theme. Hence in Cary's view, Tolstoy, like a master artist, “builds up the dramatic climax of the race as an allegory of Vronsky's relations with Anna and a premonition of her fate when she too is physically unable to serve his will” ( 161) . What is notable in this context is that he does not make the allegorical presentation too obvious and for this he gives us with marvellous skill the details of the dramatic situation realistically — the entire racing background, the mare, the trainer, etc. — in order to persuade us cajolingly to accept the intrusion of a conceptual idea without seeing its untruthfulness, which can be realised by us only subconsciously, as a result of our sympathy for the poor mare, in the form of “a vague

but strong sense of the tragic relations between the wilful impatient egotism of the man and the patient feminine devotion of his victim ( 162) . And then unfortunately our critical mind makes us uneasy and we see clearly with discomfort that the Russian celebrity, no doubt, succeeds in achieving the desired emotional effect, but certainly it is “an effect not congruent with the situation of the moment, involving characters we have accepted as actual in an actual world. We are checked by a false note” ( 162) . Cary further points out that even before it the scene disturbs us because we learn a lot about the mare's beauty, high breeding and Vronsky's love for her, and Tolstoy portrays her as such a sensitive creature that we wonder why she does not speak. The same mare is seen lying at his feet and looking to him with speaking eyes. This part of the scene assumes allegorical implication and this, in Cary's opinion with which I agree, destroys the truthfulness of the scene. As a result, the characters become mere concepts created to illustrate a theme, and the theme is reduced to a mere precept out of a copybook because

Allegory is an immense temptation to the writer, especially the great, the obsessed writer.... Allegory gives a clear, a definite meaning; not to the soul, but to the conceptual judgment, and in a form of dry precepts whose falsity is at once detected by the soul.... Allegory is false because it lays down categorical imperatives for conduct in a world of particular and unique events. It treats the world as a mechanism whereas it is a world of free souls. ( 162-63)

Cary rightly holds that although allegory is a definite mode of giving a clear and exact meaning or message and hence a great temptation to the writers, it, when too explicit, also mars a good work of art and so a great artist should make the best use of the narrow space between allegory and the dramatic scene. Cary explains how Tolstoy in the above scene of *Anna Karenina* fails as an artist because of too explicit allegorical implication, while D.H. Lawrence, certainly not as great as the celebrated Russian, is wonderful in the creation of a similar type of dramatic scene in *St Mawr*. In this fictional work, St Mawr the stallion, who stands for

uncorrupted male energy and is instinctive and above conceptual whims, is true to life. The scene in which it throws and almost kills Rico Carrington is quite close to allegory, since Rico stands for the cultural intellectualism which Lawrence despises as decadence, as something conceptual, and hence antagonistic to 'the intuitive real'. Apparently, he conveys his point artistically and is very impressive in spite of his narrow theme. The reader accepts the vital truth, communicated through the scene, despite the fact that St Mawr and Rico Carrington are intended to represent generalities as wide as presented in *Everyman*. Indeed, the Lawrence scene does not disturb us by any suspicion of allegory, for St Mawr and Rico Carrington, notwithstanding their representative characters, remain what they really are. What, according to Cary, is remarkable about Lawrence, in contrast to Tolstoy, is that the great British novelist "has got his effect with almost the precision of allegory, but without falling into that trap" ( 159) . In *Anna Karenina*, the mare collapses in the race due to Vronsky's awkward movement, and it breaks her neck. Unable to get up, her master kicks her in anger and she struggles to comply with his command. At this the reader feels perturbed by Tolstoy's overt manipulation of explicit allegorical meaning, and questions, as Cary rightly points out, "Is this Vronsky and the mare or an allegory of Vronsky and Anna, of Tolstoy's society male and his unhappy female? Is it a puppet show, with Tolstoy pulling the strings?" ( 159-60) ? And Cary wishes, as we too, that the Russian master should not have resorted to an artistically dangerous technique in this scene and should have been on a safer ground like D.H. Lawrence. It is true that Vronsky is a typical soldier, but he is much more individual and less typical than Lawrence's Carrington. What makes the Russian soldier quite a free individual character is the fact that Tolstoy deftly puts him among about half-a-dozen other typical soldiers who have been sharply differentiated from one another by the great artist in Tolstoy. Vronsky's English mare is very much like Lawrence's St Mawr — a simple, thorough bred without any typicality about it. And yet Tolstoy, universally acknowledged as a greater fictional genius than Lawrence, fails in the artistic creation of the dramatic scene and causes in the reader

immense uneasiness, while Lawrence achieves a rare success in the creation of similar scene even though it is saturated with symbolic significance. Cary explains the reason why the scene in *Anna Karenina* has a ruinous effect on the actual experience of the reader and why it becomes apparently allegorical, while the scene in Lawrence's *St Mawr* escapes free from such artistic and emotional failure. To quote Cary's own words: "For one thing, we see at once a parallel between the mare's relation with Vronsky, and Anna's, both at his mercy. And there is no such parallel suggested in *St Mawr*" ( 160) . True, allegory is not a great artistic device as it gives an explicit, definite meaning to the conceptual judgement, and not to the soul, "in a form of dry precept whose falsity is at once detected by the soul" ( 163) . Allegory is not true to life, for it imposes categorical imperatives on human conduct in a world marked by uniqueness and particularity beyond generalizations; it treats human world as a mechanism, while in reality it is lived by free souls.

Thus Cary shows how Tolstoy's failure in creating his key scene convincingly mars *Anna Karenina*, whereas Lawrence's *St Mawr*, though very close to allegory, is an artistic triumph. Vronsky becomes unconvincing in his rage which startles us because in that great scene he is untrue to his otherwise generally disciplined character, while the mare is true to her character as a good disciplined horse. But what is specially wrong with Tolstoy's portrayal of the mare is that "she is suddenly made to represent the feminine principle as Tolstoy conceived it" ( 167) . Tolstoy deserves all praise for creating a real mare, absolutely true to life, but we are shocked when all of a sudden she is shown as the representative of the feminine character in general and we, as sensitive and sensible reader, refuse to accept her in such a new unconvincing role as a part of the artificial high society which corrupts Anna in Tolstoy's view. Cary feels that the Russian novelist's lending an unexpectedly different meaning to the mare and the whole scene is unmistakably a false note and he uses the expression 'false note' knowingly because "the effect is analogous to that of the false note in music which interrupts suddenly the recreation of the structure of our subconscious and causes our critical judgement to start up and

say 'What's happened — what's wrong' ( 167) ? The falseness of the new meaning, suddenly given to the mare, becomes all the more conspicuous when we clearly see that Anna, who stands for womanhood and who as a brilliant writer's character in the narrative is part of the meaning, is a real woman in the fictionist's sense and we readily accept her as such. We know full well that women can do a lot of unusual things in the world and yet can be essentially women — i.e., good mothers, good wives, etc. While delineating Anna, Tolstoy does not evince any interest in larger issues; he simply presents to us "a woman who is woman to us as well as to him, at once a living individual and a typical woman" ( 167) . So what is wrong about Tolstoy's portrayal of the mare representing the feminine principle in relation to Anna is that a meaning has been imposed on an alien context and thus everything becomes overtly manipulated and puppet-like, whereas Lawrence's handling of St Mawr and his theme creates just the opposite artistic effect — a truly functional one. To quote Cary's words:

And what's wrong in this case is simply that the meaning of a note, or phrase, the mare, has been forced into a context that doesn't belong to it. So she loses even her own character as a mare — she becomes like a performing animal, a puppet, manipulated by Tolstoy. St Mawr is not a puppet because his meaning in the tale is not only one with his nature, but with his function in the tale.

For we must remember always a tale is not life, it is art and subject to the limitations of art, in this case, to the logic of the subconscious, allotting by association a meaning to each character, to each development, in a construction that is fundamentally As If. ( 167-68)

In conclusion, I feel inclined to state, on the basis of above discussion, that in his critique of Tolstoy the artist, Joyce Cary is concerned with only germ or intuition, theme, form, morality and allegory. Clearly, his evaluation of the great Russian's creative genius, though doubtless invaluable, lacks comprehensiveness and air of finality.

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## 8

## SUMMING-UP

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to examine the impact and impressions, positive and negative, created by Leo Tolstoy on his contemporary major British novelists such as Henry James, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and Joyce Cary. A born genius, nourished and nurtured to blossom fully by his dedication to intellectual and moral pursuits as well as by the positive facets of his ambience, he left his indelible stamp on the intellectuals and artists of his time the world over. The present chapter is devoted to the inferences emerging from the discussions contained in the foregoing chapters.

A sensitive and inquisitive mind, Tolstoy himself was the product of the numerous factors prevalent all around him in his shaping years. Undaunted by the loss of his mother and father at the tender age of two and nine respectively, he could acquire fairly good education and could establish a remarkable educational institution to impart sound education to the peasants in his estate; and despite his periodic indulgence in profligacy and dissipation, he could cultivate and propagate high moral and social values. Even as a teenager he could frame some invaluable “rules of life” — viz. early to bed and early to rise, moderate eating, walking for an hour at least, doing everything possible for himself, etc. — to lead a regular and balanced life for attaining happiness through high standards of physical, moral and intellectual activities. Thus, he was determined to lead a truly meaningful life.

An intellectual glutton, Tolstoy read abundantly and was immensely profited by it in his creative, moral and social pursuits. Some of the outstanding writers he happened to peruse were Pushkin, Sterne, Dickens, Thackeray, Balzac, Stendhal, Beranger, Rousseau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ostrovsky, Griboyeder, Turgenev, Pisemsky, Plato, D.N. Begichev and others. These authors helped him to

propound a clear-cut literary creed as well as a moral and social vision. Obviously, he learnt a lot from these writers, thus equipping himself fully to create outstanding fictional and non-fictional works.

Relationships are of vital significance in everyone's life, and this was true of Tolstoy too. The deaths of his parents in his early life, and of his sister, daughter and son in his later days lent sombreness and maturity to his vision of life. But more than anyone or anything else, his changing relationship with his wife Sofya — precarious and happy in the beginning and very bitter in the later part of his life — was of vital consequences. It was she who was a constant source of inspiration and hard work during the long period of several years when he was immersed in the writing and final finishing of his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, and it was she alone who was squarely responsible for his leaving home stealthily once for all and meeting his tragic end at an unknown stationmaster's house.

Despite his unbearably miserable life, Tolstoy's fame as creative artist — fictionist and dramatist —, socio-religious thought-provoking writer, and educationist touched the pinnacle of glory. This is evident from the unprecedented acknowledgement of his greatness in the form of the massive bulk of messages that he received from the stalwarts of the varied countries of the world on his eightieth birthday. Small wonder the great English fictionists of that period were struck by his genius and reacted almost automatically and compulsively to his writings in accordance with their own predilections and prejudices. A close study of their response to him is, indeed, immensely interesting.

Of these British fiction writers, Henry James, who is generally regarded as the pioneer of modern English fiction and is called, to quote Leon Edel's words, “the Shakespeare of the English novel,” read Tolstoy carefully, thought about him seriously and wrote about him incisively. James was a theorist of the novel with his own fixed and well thought-out notions about it, evolved under the puissant influence of the French masters like Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal who laid special stress on form. Consequently, James has an obsession with form and believes that form is content and content is

form, and that it is form which “holds and preserves” and imparts a genuine meaning to the subject matter. This leads him to pass his nasty judgment on some of the great works of fiction, including Tolstoy's *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, by proclaiming them as “large loose baggy monsters.” Likewise, he feels that the great Russian was primarily for “home consumption”. In his well-known critical essay, “Turgenev and Tolstoy”, he makes some brilliant comments on Tolstoy's two outstanding novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and admits him to be “a great writer”, but he considers Turgenev a greater fictionist and calls him “the novelists' novelist”. The reason is that he perceives in Tolstoy's books a delineation of the vastness of life with utter disregard for form and proportion. Of course, by implication he eulogizes the Russian genius for his amazing ability to present the whole human life as far as possible. While James's great friend Turgenev could discern the wonderful presentation of both the inner and the outer life in the writings of his illustrious compatriot, he completely failed to see this extraordinary aspect of his creative genius because of his too much care for method and technique, notwithstanding the fact that Tolstoy was no less than a truly conscious artist like James, as is borne out by the truth that he revised *War and Peace* a number of times in order to impart the presentation of vast life the best possible meaning and form. Then, he considers Zola's *La Debacle* a better work than *War and Peace* so far as form is concerned. However, he evinces good critical perception when he declares the Russian's epical novel much more universal than that of Zola. Apparently, he obliquely highlights the universal and epical genius of Tolstoy. Also, he shows how *War and Peace* is a yardstick to measure the greatness of a work when he puts the work of his favourite Zola beside that of Tolstoy. In his famous article, “The New Novel”, James advises his younger contemporaries to cultivate Tolstoy's skill of portraying life in all its depth and breadth, but at the same time they must avoid his way of divorcing matter from manner. He finds the Russian's work wanting in a controlling idea or a central theme. His faulty prejudice and critical sense are apparent when he laments Tolstoy's failure in giving an artistically meaningful shape to the

vast subject matter in *War and Peace*, but extols such ordinary novels as Hugh Walpole's *Duchess of Wrexhe* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* for possessing the commanding idea and structural wholeness. In his critical writings, he, again and again, debunks Tolstoy for degrading art by making form subservient to content. What we infer is that James downright condemns Tolstoy's works for shapelessness and looseness since technique and presentation are all-important to him, but these are of a little value in comparison with the convincing portrayal of life in its wholeness. In a word, to James architectural excellence and craftsmanship are of utmost significance for the novel as a work of art, whereas to Tolstoy the faithful and meaningful presentation of humanity in all its dimensions is of much greater importance than artistic excellence; while the former cannot tolerate the gulf between matter and manner, the latter is not very particular about it. Naturally, James's assessment of Tolstoy suffers from personal bias and lacks critical detachment.

Like James, Somerset Maugham is enamoured of French fiction masters — Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant and Goncourts —, but, unlike his senior contemporary, he is one of the greatest admirers of Tolstoy. As early as 1941 in his book, *A Writer's Notebook*, he declared him to be one of the four greatest novelists the world produced, the other three being Dostoevsky, Balzac and Dickens. In his widely read book, *The World's Ten Greatest Novels*, he asserts that *War and Peace* is the greatest novel and Balzac the greatest novelist of the world. In direct contradiction to James, he repeatedly affirms that the Russian possesses an inborn instinct to marshal his material in “the most effective, dramatic and interesting” manner. Then, he spotlights his wonderful power of creating a large number (say about five hundred) of living characters marked by astonishing variety — a power possessed only by few novelists such as Dickens and Balzac. Also, he accentuates his portrayal of “broad humanity” and the universal appeal of the matter he deals with. He points out that notwithstanding the historical and temporal background of *War and Peace*, this novel will never lose its appeal because it is centred around war and peace — the two subjects which have been man's obsession ever since the beginning of human

race —; war is an innate, basic human instinct, while love, hate, life, death, fellow feelings, etc. are the dominant features of peacetime life. Unlike James, he rightly feels that life is characterised by “arbitrariness and inconsequence”, and thus even a great artist’s faithful presentation of it may make his work suffer from an external shapelessness, though not from inner form or logic which is more meaningful and worthwhile than outer form. Maugham points to the significance of culture fiction — fiction which every well-bred man likes to read — like that of Tolstoy as it infuses the reader with joy and “fruitful energy” which is the aim of every great artistic creation. Further, his writing is greatly enriched by “the power and fullness of his personality” like that of Milton or Balzac. In fact, much of his greatness depends on the artistic articulation of his repressed instincts and day dreams. In *War and Peace*, Pierre, Natasha, Prince Andre and others record the sublimation of his suppressed sex desires, spiritual quests, renunciation of the world, etc. Maugham’s originality as critic is evident not only in his estimation of *War and Peace*, in sharp contrast to James’s opinion of it as “large loose baggy monster”, as the greatest fictional work of the world, but also in his observations on *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*. Differing from a critic of the stature of Matthew Arnold who considers *Anna Karenina* “a piece of life” — a realistic representation of life — and many others who have accorded it wholehearted adulation for its thematic treatment and formal excellence, he believes that in spite of its original and powerful portrayal of life, it is “a little hard and dry”. As regards *Resurrection*, he asserts that it is a weak work on account of its apparent moral propaganda, but Tolstoy, by dint of his extraordinary gifts as artist, invests it with some outstanding artistic virtues such as realistic and poetic effects of nature, and remarkable characterisation, especially that of minor characters painted with distinct individual traits in just a few lines. In short, Maugham attributes Tolstoy’s greatness to such rare qualities as his prodigious creative fecundity, his picture of the whole life and civilisation of his age, his immaculate understanding of men and manners, his grasp of good and evil, his vigour and vitality, his powerful imagination and observation, his wonderful knowledge of human nature

imbued with sympathy and intelligence, etc. These outstanding merits of his mind and art amply compensate “the natural inadequacy of the form”, indifference to language and expression, and deficiencies of his personality from which his writings suffer, and we naturally feel the impact of his colossal genius.

About two decades before Maugham’s assertion that Tolstoy is one of the few greatest novelists of the world and *War and Peace* is the world’s greatest novel, E.M. Forster, surely a more competent and established critic than Maugham with a comprehensive study of fiction like *Aspects of the Novel* to his credit, declares Tolstoy to be a master novelist, greater than any English fictionist. He ascribes much of the Russian’s greatness to his power of comprehending and dispassionately portraying the vast panorama of life — life in its depth and breadth. As a matter of fact, he paints much more than the life in time, goes further than the life by values and takes into his scope space in its vastness. His masterpiece, *War and Peace*, spreads over space and time, and “leaves behind it an effect like music.” He possesses a rare sense of space which is, to quote Forster’s words, “is the lord of *War and Peace*, not time.” Forster accentuates Tolstoy’s unique power of creating real people with contradictions which are true to life. Consequently, his men and women are living human beings, and not masked skeletons. Another commendable feature of Tolstoy’s art of characterisation is his capacity to create immortal characters who live two lives, life in the novel and life eternal. His immortal creations — Natasha, Anna Karenina, Andre, Nicollay and others — are not only true to life in the book but also live in the memory of the reader for a long time, while Virginia Woolf’s major characters — Clarissa Dalloway, Rachel, Mrs. Ramsay and others — live only in the books and do not haunt the reader’s memory. However, more remarkable than this is the fact that *War and Peace* is the only novel which has a kinship with the highest form of music, the most difficult type of rhythm like that of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, for it possesses the effect of expansion — a kind of opening out —, and not of completion, leaving us to a larger existence than what is possible at the time. Contradicting Henry James, Forster states that *War and*



*Peace*, notwithstanding its epical enormousness, its presentation of a vast panorama of life, is artistic as well because of its meaningful form, its laudable “architectural unity and pre-ordained form.” In fact, Forster is so much overwhelmed by Tolstoy’s fictional genius as reflected in his *magnum opus*, *War and Peace*, that he begins and ends his famous Clark lectures published under the title *Aspects of the Novel* with a reference to it. Not only this, he regards it as one of the three greatest books of the world, the other two being Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and also asserts that *War and Peace* is “the greatest novel western civilization has produced.” But what is strange and unpalatable about Forster’s evaluation of Tolstoy is that he has based his judgement only on *War and Peace* and three short stories, evincing his complete ignorance of novels like *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* by not referring to them even once in *Aspects of the Novel* — an incisive full-length study of fiction — and the large body of essays he has published in *Two Cheers for Democracy* and *Abinger Harvest*. Still, I feel that his cogitations on Tolstoy are generally balanced and help us in acquiring a better understanding of the great Russian’s mind and art.

One thing particularly worth noting in this context is that decades before E.M. Forster and Somerset Maugham’s well-founded opinion that Tolstoy is the creator of the best novel of the world, Virginia Woolf brought to light the Russian’s greatness in the twenties of the last century. She not only wrote about his works but also published and translated some of his writings — Tolstoy’s *The Table Talk*, *Tolstoy’s Love Letters* and *Talk with Tolstoy* were published in the early 1920s by the Hogarth Press owned by her. Importantly, she did all this when the early British response to him was unmistakably unfavourable — George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, George Saintsbury, Maurice Thompson and several others rejected him —, and thus she was perhaps the first to assign him his due high place in the literary world. Around the year 1920 she made strong statements in favour of Tolstoy’s extraordinary creative genius in her two famous critical essays, “Modern Fiction” and “The Russian Point of View”. She points to Tolstoy’s

and other eminent Russian writers’ deep interest in inner life and saintliness in the form of their unfathomable love and concern for the suffering humanity, and hence calls them spiritualists as against the materialists like John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet and H.G. Wells who are interested only in the outer reality of life. She begins “The Russian Point of View” with the assertion that Tolstoy is the greatest novelist of the world simply because he is the author of the inimitable *War and Peace*. Then, she points out the outstanding merits of Tolstoy — viz. the quality of familiarity and his power of looking at everything from the external to the internal; universality as the world depicted by him is just like the one we inhabit; richness in everyday life experiences and culture; acuteness of senses and intellect, capable of perceiving and comprehending everything, internal or external, animate or inanimate, thus possessing God-like omniscience; and mingling of absorbing pleasure and excruciating pain and fear. Since Virginia Woolf considers lifelike character-creation as the soul of fiction writing, she has the highest possible praise for Tolstoy because of his power of creating living characters marked by amazing variety and complexity. She demonstrates how Charlotte Bronte’s men and women are repetitive and almost lifeless in contrast to Tolstoy’s vigorous and many-faceted living characters. Such creations of Tolstoy enable him to re-create the vastness of life, nearly as vast as the universe itself, with utmost truthfulness and integrity, thus presenting “a certain looking-glass likeness to life.” Exceedingly interested in psychology and judging Tolstoy by her psychological interpretation of life, Virginia Woolf finds him simply outstanding. She believes that everyday human life is constituted of moments of ‘being’ and ‘non-being’ — moments of profound revelation/realization called ‘epiphany’ by James Jpyce, and moments of commonplace experiences. Tolstoy is great in that he succeeds in delineating both the moments of being and non-being, and he is a perfect writer as he attaches equal importance to both the aspects of life, both the moments of ‘being’ and ‘non-being’. Furthermore, Virginia Woolf holds that Tolstoy is such a great writer because he is a highly deliberate craftsman who regards the novel as a work of art which is evident from the fact that he revised and

re-wrote *War and Peace* several times in continuation in order to impart a meaningful, best possible shape to it. However, like a true critic, she does not hesitate to pinpoint Tolstoy's blemishes. She lauds his saintliness but laments the absence of natural joy in the comic side of life in his works, the grandeur of the earth, the pleasures of the body and the inner workings of mind. Also, she points to the structural flaws which are obvious in his novels owing to his delineation of the world in its vastness, resulting in the cracks in his books caused by his endeavour to present vast space and long periods of time. Even a novel like *Anna Karenina*, which stretches over a space and time much narrower than that of *War and Peace* is not free from structural weaknesses. Lastly, she is not happy with him because of his contempt for women in his later novels like *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *Resurrection*.

Though out and out original in every respect, D.H. Lawrence is an extremist to some extent, and thus his approach to Tolstoy is glaringly marked by contradictions and hence strikingly different from that of any of the British fictionists so far scrutinized. Also, unlike them, he has not written any article exclusively on Tolstoy, and yet the observations he has made on him in his expository writings — especially *Study of Thomas Hardy*, "The Novel", *Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, letters, etc. — form a greater corpus than that of any one of them. Clearly he is irresistibly attracted towards the great Russian's genius and consequently has discussed him time and again. On the one hand, he calls him one of the three "greatest writers of all time" (the other two being Turgenev and Dostoevsky) and "a great creative artist", but on the other he describes him as "old liar" and "claw-biting little Leo". While explaining the three main qualities of the novel in his brilliant essay titled "The Novel", he frequently refers to Tolstoy to illustrate his view. For instance, he asserts that the novel should necessarily be "quick" and admires wholeheartedly Tolstoy for his skill in creating characters saturated with "quickness". But as regards the third requisite of the novel, i.e. it should be "honourable", he avers that the author of *War and Peace* is dishonourable because he presents fat, unpleasant Pierre as an important and

desirable person, who, in reality, is not pleasant and desirable even to the author himself. A novelist is honourable when he is true to everything in his work — moral purpose, characters, his own character and his passionate inspiration. Moreover, Tolstoy does not grant actual freedom to his characters because he has a definite philosophy of his own which affects his creations. Further, Tolstoy was very lecherous, but would condemn others indulging in lust, thus exposing himself as dishonourable. Also, he, according to Lawrence, fails to transcend his ego and his belief in the absolute. Then, what is appalling in Tolstoy is that the didactic purpose becomes explicit in his works despite his endeavour on the contrary. Little wonder *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* are outright rejected by Lawrence because in them the moral intention is not only over-emphasized but also alienated from the passional inspiration, and more than that the author does not offer us a candid criticism of the ill-effects of morality. Again, Lawrence denigrates Tolstoy for his worshipping the human male, "man as a column of rapacious and living blood", and all the more for this because he could tolerate Lenin and Stalin for changing the Russians into Bolshevists, and despite being the creator of such rebels as Vronsky and Anna Karenina, he could timidly acquiesce in Bolshevism. Thus, we notice that Lawrence's reaction to Tolstoy is a unique amalgam of extreme admiration and denunciation.

Unlike the English novelists, discussed above, Joyce Cary, the youngest of them, admits that Tolstoy is one of his masters. Obviously, he refers to him again and again in his non-fictional writings, especially the prefatory essays to the Carfax edition of his novels and the six Clark lectures published in book form entitled *Art and Reality*. Moreover, he is the only one who has reacted sharply to the Russian's concept of love and marriage with special reference to women, as presented by him in the novel, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and has brought out an interesting creative work, *The Moonlight Sonata*. Cary illustrates his views on art and the novel from Tolstoy. He points out that every great artist, like the eminent Russian, has the origin and beginning of his work in his intuitive grasp of something new about the universe, in a "sudden subcon-

scious recognition of the real." This new awareness of some facet of the world becomes clear to him through the process of reflection and experience/knowledge, and becomes his theme. Cary points out that the artist has to seek for an appropriate expression to explore and communicate his intuitive idea/feeling and its true impression on him. He explains all this through Tolstoy's comments on the origin and creation of *Anna Karenina*. Taking a stand, different from that of any of the five writers already examined in this chapter, Cary believes that a writer must focus on his theme seriously and consistently without making it light in any way or subservient to any other issue. This leads him to state that if a novel is very wide in scope, the weaker it is in power and significance because its focus on theme gets diverted and this is the reason why *Anna Karenina* is more powerful than *War and Peace*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata* more than *Anna Karenina*. Cary, differing from Lawrence, approves of Tolstoy's idea of art for the sake of moral purpose, and not for the sake of aesthetic pleasure. He highly admires Tolstoy's concern for morals as evinced in his creative works as well as non-fictional writings including *What Is Art? And Essays on Art*. The fact is that a writer's work embodies his meaning of life which is essentially moral, and thus it preaches the reader in one way or another and inculcates in him the sense of right and wrong. But Cary opines that art should not preach openly, and that is why Tolstoy's *Resurrection* is a bad work as it fails to conceal the author's intention of instructing the reader. However, it does not mean that the artist ought not communicate a message or moral; what Cary wants to stress is that the author should convey the message garbed in experience. In other words, a work of art should not be a vehicle of propaganda, but should preach implicitly. If it preaches directly, it is a bad art like *Resurrection* or *The Kreutzer Sonata*. As a matter of fact, a good work should state a case, but should not pass a judgement. Even a character like Tolstoy's Peter in *War and Peace* is undesirable, for he states the case/argument, in detail, and not a case/argument. Again, he avers that the genuineness of an artist lies in presenting the experience, and not the concept as Tolstoy does in *The Kreutzer Sonata* which is a poor work of art due to this

reason. It is interesting to note Cary's critical comments on Tolstoy's use of allegorical device in *Anna Karenina*. The British novelist-critic feels that allegory is not true to life, for it imposes a definite moral meaning on human conduct in a world characterized by uniqueness but beyond generalisation — a world inhabited by free souls who are opposed to mechanism which allegory indulges in. A cut and dry use of allegory in a key scene in *Anna Karenina* in which the mare is made to represent the feminine principle as conceived by Tolstoy is unconvincing; on the other hand, Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, which is quite close to allegory, is, in Cary's opinion, undoubtedly a great artistic success. What is wrong about Tolstoy is that he manipulates to lend a meaning to the mare scene without any reference to the context. In a word, Cary makes critical comments on Tolstoy's fiction mainly from the standpoint of intuition, theme, form, morality and allegory, and hence his approach to him is narrow and limited.

To end, it may be inferred that the above-discussed modern British fictionists, with the exception of Henry James, were irresistibly fascinated and influenced by Leo Tolstoy's art and ideas in their own unique ways, usually differing from one another. One thing overtly common about them is that they are unanimous in their vociferous acknowledgement of Tolstoy's greatness. However, Henry James, seniormost of them, is very critical of Tolstoy's novelistic art for want of form. But he is certainly not fair in his judgement which is marred by one-sidedness — the consideration of form — and personal prejudices. Somerset Maugham and E.M. Forster are just the opposite of James, and they shower all praise on Tolstoy without any reservations. Their approach is also, to some extent, imbalanced. Virginia Woolf's unrestrained admiration for him is based on her predilection for the inner life and saintliness as opposed to the concern for sheer external life dubbed materialism by her. Apparently, hers is a restricted, incomprehensive view of his genius. Differing from her and others, Lawrence is original and unique in his observations on Tolstoy. His opinions embrace the extremes of praise and disparage; he repeatedly refers to his greatness, but at the same time does not hesitate in condemning him because his novels

are not “honourable”. True, he perceives both the sides of his art and ideas, the pleasant and the unpleasant, the high and the low. The views of the last novelist — viz. Joyce Cary—, examined in this study, are not as profound as those of Virginia Woolf and Lawrence; he does not delve deep into the illustrious Russian's creative genius.