

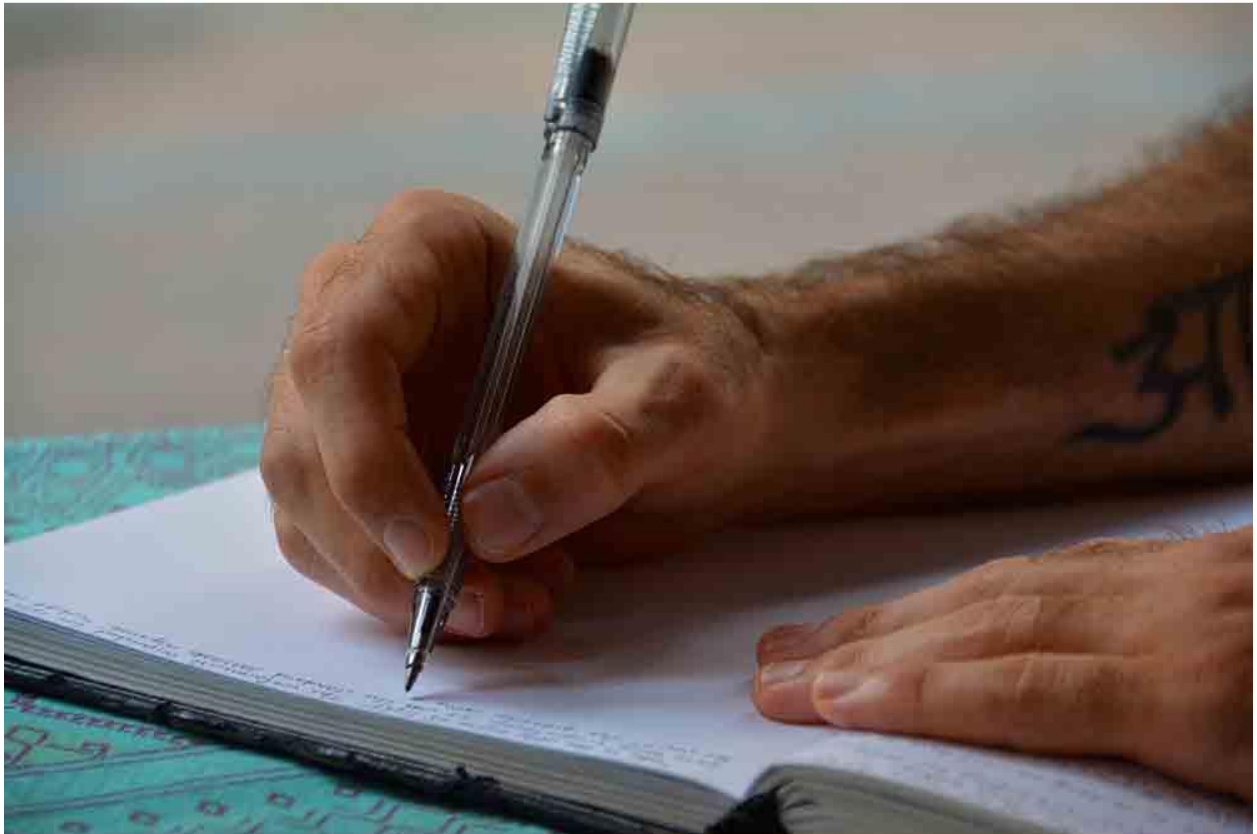
ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER

ISSN-2321-7065

IJELLH

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



Volume 7, Issue 4, April 2019

www.ijellh.com

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Life and sufferance; Struggle for existence in J.M.Synge's 'The playboy of the Western World', 'Rides to the sea' and 'Shadow of the Glen'

Abstract

The Celtic Revival aimed at saving the oldest Irish folklore, legends and traditions through the literary works produced by Irish authors. It was a complex movement that involved itself with self-government for Ireland and finding about its literary past. J.M.Synge, one of the moving figures of Irish Revival, had put forward the Irish nationalist spirit. Also the pagan outlook of the Irish people is breathed through his plays. But in the midst of all these 'suffering' played the main tune. My motive is to trace through his 'The Playboy of the Western world', 'The Shadow of the Glen' and 'Riders to the Sea' the continuum flow of pain that run human living motivates life to learn and be fortified for the greater future.

KEY WORDS: pain, suffering, fortify

John Millington Synge, one of the greatest playwright of Irish Literary Revival is also a key figure in Celtomania and cofounder of the Abbey Theatre. In 1886 he met W.B. Yeats in Paris, who encouraged Synge to live with peasant sailors on the Aran Islands, which is his inspiration to write about the history and local folklore. Synge in his THE ARAN ISLANDS has reflected his experience that was based on his multiple travels through the Irish speaking and predominantly rural set of islands off the Western coast of Ireland. Synge's interactions

with the local people, their culture and language served as the plot of his plays. Therefore his plays extol the realistic human living stature.

His plays 'The Playboy of the Western World', 'Rides to the Sea', and 'Shadow of the Glen' present the general human misery. True that in all these plays we will find an unhappy ending, but also gain the knowledge that human is blessed with the ability of enduring any painful hurdle. Though 'happiness is the rarest occasion in the general drama of pain', yet life gets fortified after passing through these miserable thorns.

The 'Playboy of the Western World' is regarded as one of the greatest classics of Ireland. The play features Christy Mahon, the down-and-out young man who stumbles into Michael Flaherty's pub and intrigues all the locals with a tale of killing his father. The plot of the play is traceable in Synge's The Aran Islands (1907) :

"While the curaghs are out I am left with a few women and very old men who cannot row. One of these old men, done remarkable cures.....and came home with his pockets full of money.

Another old man... often tells me about a Connaught man who killed his father with a blow of a spade...." (Keffer)

Synge realistically portrayed the characters and their sufferings. Christy Mahon's life was greatly authorized by his father Old Mahon. However, Christy got himself freed from his father and arrived in rural Country Mayo. He surprised and made all the locals awe inspired by his story of killing his father with a loy. But the appearance of Christy's father change the whole circumstance. Old Mahon claims his son to be lazy, shy and incompetent. Consequently, to Christy's great dismay, all the local people who were praising Christy as a great hero began to look down upon him as a spineless low creature. Christy loved Pegeen Mike and she too loved him, but when at the face of grave adversity Christy did not even think of his own self and only thought of Pegeen – thought never to leave her, Pegeen

disregarded her true love. She along with the villagers accumulated to tie Christy and burn him. Realistic enough is the ending of the play when Old Mahon unties his son thus saving Christy, who in turn learnt from life and became a real hero. From Old Mahon's shy and incompetent son Christy became the hero like epitome, and leaves on a triumphant note, blessing the crowd for having turned him into a 'likely gaffer' whereas Pegeen, devastated, laments her loss of 'the only Playboy of the Western World', thus initiating in the audience that pain is the tune that make us learn of life.

In his play 'Shadow of the Glen' we find the obvious tension between the basic human need for security and the equally basic urge for freedom. The play pits Nora's secure domestic existence against the Trump's freewheeling life. Nora's marriage to Burke for his farm, livestock and money was her bid for security, but it has caused her only unhappiness and loneliness. Nora's loneliness is evident from the dialogue -

“...Isn't a dead man itself more company than to be sitting alone, and hearing the.... Winds crying, and you not knowing on what thing your mind would stay?”

Unhappiness and loneliness lead to Nora's sufferings. Nora does not fit into the role of the traditional 1900s housewives. Nora and her husband had a broken marriage. The play recurrently plants in the audience the pain of isolation, doubts and unhappiness. Besides the unhappy and lonely wife Nora, Dan Burke, the white-haired farmer and Nora's husband, is also not content with his wife and their married life. He keeps doubt that his wife may have a secret lover. His doubts make him feigning death and thereby exposing his wife's lack of affection for him.

‘Riders to the Sea’ displays sufferings of a different dimension in respect to his plays ‘The Playboy of the Western world’ and ‘Shadow of the Glen’. While these two plays fall in the genre of farcical comedy, ‘Riders to the Sea’ is categorized as a tragedy, though not the tragedy of a particular person of kingly stature, but a tragedy of general human misery.

Maurya is the epitome of general human society that has no alternative rather than accepting the cruel claws of Fate. Synge’s accounts, in his travel memoir The Aran Islands (1907), of the identification of the drowned man by his clothing and the scene of a man’s ghost being seen riding a horse, served as scenes in the play. The play involves simple plot with an implicit conflict between the Sea and Humanity (A.K.Mishra). Maurya, the mother has lost all the male members of her family and ultimately accepted her fate on the face of a cruel power (sea) that engulfed all her sons, her husband, and her father-in-law. Despite her sufferings Maurya is not the Aristotelian tragic heroine. She has no ‘chink in her armour’.

The play shows the sufferings of real men and women dealing with their day to day real living conditions. All the people of the Island, including Maurya’s family was dependent upon the hostile sea for their living and the Sea snatched Maurya away of her family by robbing all the male members of her family of their lives. All these circumstances gradually turned Maurya towards stoicism: “No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied”.

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