

## The English Drama: John Galsworthy

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*John Galsworthy was one of the prominent dramatist from the English dramatic tradition who discussed various problems of modern society of the day. His plays are so many pieces of social criticism containing of contemporary life. Galsworthy rebelled against the social class to which he belonged. He exposed compassionate sympathy for the poor and oppressed. He showed hard acquisitive instinct, their unsympathetic social morality, their clannishness, their want of finer sensibilities, their incapacity to appreciate arts and culture, he was endowed with extreme compassion and felt genuinely for poor and socially oppressed section of the community. He remained throughout his life a gentleman in the social sense of the world, reserved, dignified, with a marked distaste for self advertisement.*

### **Keywords:**

*Productive, Palpitating, Beacon, Utilization, Humanist, Underdog, Publicized, Eradicated, Propagative, Yeoman.*

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The power of modern drama as an interpreter of the pressing questions of our time is perhaps nowhere evident as clearly as it is in England. Indeed, while other countries have almost come to a standstill in dramatic art, England is the most productive even today.

The most prolific English dramatist, John Galsworthy is at the same time a great artist whose dramatist quality can be compared with that of only one other writer namely Gerhart Hauptman.

Galsworthy, even as Hauptman is neither a propagandist nor a moralist. His background is life, "that palpitating life", which is the root of all sorrows and joy.

His attitude towards dramatic art is given in the following words : "I look upon the stage as the great beacon light of civilization, but the drama should lead the social thought of the time and not direct or dictate it."

Galsworthy presents his situation and characters with impartiality but a deeper reading of his plays brings out his sympathy for the downtrodden and the underdog of society. His sympathy extends even to animals. He has a Tolstoyan reverence for all life. Once the veil of his intellectual impartiality is lifted the humanist Galsworthy is clearly revealed voicing his strongest protest against the cruelty and injustice of our society. The warm sympathy of the dramatist is evident in almost all his plays, and numerous examples may be cited at random. *Justice*, *Silver Box*, *Strife*, *Eldest Son*, *Joy for all* reveal the sympathy of the dramatist for the poor and the oppressed. He was aware of his responsibility to the society, and to the underdog, he donated half of his income in charity to the poor. He and his wife Ada Galsworthy served the wounded soldiers during the world-war. He even loved dumb animals like dogs, cats and horses. He gave much of his time to social and political causes i.e. slum clearance, a minimum wages for workers in sweated industries, reforms in the divorce law, and the prison system, votes for women, improvement in slaughter houses and better working conditions for ponies in mines. The help he gave privately to innumerable people in need was never publicized.

There is no wonder if such a kind hearted and generous philanthropist hated injustice and disliked hypocrisy, conscious of his responsibility to society as an ideal citizen he wants to eradicate or to put an end to the ills and evils of society by spreading social awakening through his works. He professed his ideas and makes a tender appeal for understanding, indirectly in almost all his plays he believes most of the troubles of life can be avoided if there is human understanding and sympathetic approach to the problems.

But Galsworthy is not primarily a missionary dramatist. He has indeed a message to deliver but he takes care that it shall be artistically enforced by the long propagative speeches of one outstanding character.

We find many books in the world literature where that make the people aware of their responsibility or inspire them to act. Bankimchandra's novel *Anand's Math* has created a spiritual awakening during the freedom struggle. It created such a band of fearless revolutionaries that they embraced death cheerfully with the last word on their lips "Vande Mataram" for the nations sake. The aim of the dramatist is to devote his art to render yeoman service and Galsworthy depicted an epoch of smug convention and social injustice with incisive clarity. He depicted facts of the English Character inherent that epoch and the social system that typified it, without either animosity or fulsome indulgence. To speak in Mr. Coats words "Galsworthy is no spinner of pleasant tales and fantasies, he is a Daniel come to Judgment. He considered the present social organization and conventions as responsible for this suffering and hence he wanted to reform our social life. But he was not a

propagandist like Shaw, therefore he suggested reforms in his dramas in a hushed and muffled tone. That he intended to reform society through his plays cannot be gainsaid. There is hardly any one of his plays which does not convey a message or suggest a reform. He was a social reformer. He regarded drama as a criticism of life drama gave him one advantage, the reason was that the more concentrated and more plastic medium of drama gave him powers of character analysis and dialogue writing greater scope and he could more effectively bring home to his audience the ideals he stood for in matter of social reform. Galsworthy who was cold, impartial, judicial and self controlled. His qualities suited prose better. But he ranks as one of the great novelist and dramatist of our time.

John Galsworthy has undoubtedly succeeded in presenting real life. It is this that makes him so thoroughly human and universal.

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