

ISSN : 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



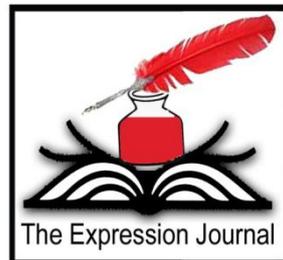
Impact Factor 3.9

Vol. 6 Issue 3 June 2020

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : editor@expressionjournal.com

www.expressionjournal.com



LEO TOLSTOY, LIFE, WORKS AND MAJOR THEMES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Budhanath Pratihast
Assistant Professor of English
Bihar Institute of Law, Patna
Bihar, India

.....

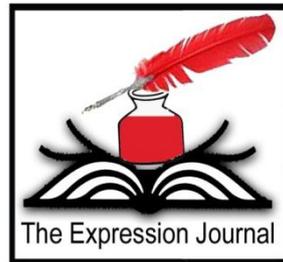
Abstract

This world is very strange because it is filled with such people who play different roles and take different routes in their life. There are people like Valmiki, Guru Nanak, Gautama Buddha, Angulimal, Kalidas, Socrates, Chanakya, Leo Tolstoy who were living their life in a different way but their lives are changed unexpectedly and they take a different course of life. In this world, human beings remain in the utter dilemma what to do and what not to do. This paper is also an exploration of a world famous personality Leo Tolstoy who was engrossed in the materialistic pursuits but he could not know when and how his life started changing. He became so famous that he is known by all literature lovers. His works got publicity very rapidly and he established himself as a writer. He had never thought that he can ever become a writer because he had no interest in his studies. Later these man gives very valuable ideas on the education. Tolstoy's philosophy of his life and his objectives to live life remain at the core of his writings. His works are the reflection of his personality and sometimes autobiographical elements are also seen in his works. This paper is an effort to examine Leo Tolstoy's life, his achievements, his place as a writer, his major works and recurring themes in his works.

Keywords

Leo Tolstoy, Philosophical Ideas, Life, Works, Major Themes.

.....



LEO TOLSTOY, LIFE, WORKS AND MAJOR THEMES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Budhanath Pratihast
Assistant Professor of English
Bihar Institute of Law, Patna
Bihar, India

.....

Leo Tolstoy was a Russian writer whose thoughts in his writings were so deep that the readers read his works again and again. Besides before a writer, he was a preacher also and he talked about peace, calmness and harmony in relationships. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize from 1902 to 1906 continuously but unfortunately, he could not get this prize.

He was born at his family estate Yasnaya Polyana on September 09, 1928. He was the youngest of his four brothers. He faced many problems in his life. He was weak in his studies and his teachers would remain concerned about him. His parents died in his childhood so his uncle and aunts brought him up. He was a very irresponsible person and his youth life remained much lewd. He had extra-marital relationships due to which his wife would remain unhappy from him.

Though Tolstoy enrolled in the University of Kazan in 1843 in Oriental Languages Programme but he failed and he left the university without taking his degree and returned to his parents' estate to become a farmer. Leo Tolstoy now started thinking to change the world and humanity was at his first priority in the service of mankind.

There was a class division in Russia and Tolstoy wanted to reform the society. He joined the military at the advice of his brother Nikolay who was doing job in military. By 1950, he noticed changes in his personality. He left the Russian army and he wrote his autobiography in three volumes. He was married with Sofya Andreyevna Ber in 1962 and had thirteen children out of nine survived. He became so depressed from his life that he even starts thinking to commits suicide. The thoughts of suicide also reflect in his novel *Anna Karenina* also:

Light is darkness, darkness light, so that the final passage of Anna's suicide reiterates the problematic of the metaphor: And the light of the candle by

which she had read the book filled with troubles, falsehoods, sorrow and evil flared up more brightly than ever before, lighted up for her all that had been shrouded in darkness, flickered grew dim, and was quenched forever. (AK 800)

Tolstoy wrote about Vedanta and Hinduism in his works. He studied many religious books. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution were at the background of his life. He started writing and forgot to wind up his works. He started writing *War and Peace* in 1860 and completed it in 1868. His main works are *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *The Kingdom of God is within You* and *Resurrection*. Tolstoy laid emphasis on the art whether it was related with human beings or the nature. He remarks, "An Art-product is only then a genuine art-product when it brings a new feeling (howsoever insignificant) into the current 3 of human life" (150).

Leo Tolstoy's heroines such as Natasha, Anna and Maslova suffered a lot in their life. Among them Natasha Rostov is the representation of all the women who live their life with joyful vitality. She is quite different from her husband's first wife Helene Kuragina. Natasha's deeds and activities are liked by everyone. She wants to be free from all the worries of life.

Though she is engaged with Prince Andrei yet there is breakup between them soon and she marries to Pierre. Natasha has a charming look and lovely voice. She is adept in winning the love of anybody she meets in her life. When she meets Prince Andrei for the first time, he gets attracted towards her.

In fact, Countess Natasha Rostova is the main female protagonist of Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* which was published in 1969. Her father Ilya Rostaove was a kind-hearted nobleman. When the novel begins, she is merely thirteen years old. She falls in love with the price Boris Drubetskoy who lived with her mother in Rostove estate.

Natasha falls in love with Prince Andrei Bolkonsky when Pierre introduces her to the prince. She gets engaged with him but Andrei's father was not happy with this relationship. The puts pressure on his son not to marry for at least one year.

In Andrei's absence, Prince Anatole Kuragin wants to woe Natasha though he was already married. Natasha has weak point that she is unable to take strong decisions in her life and she tries to elope with Kuragin. When her plan is failed, she tries to commit suicide but fortunately her life is saved by doctor. Her spiritual development cannot be called much philosophical and her decisions are immature. But there is a drastic change in her character at the end of the novel when she become Pierre's spiritual equal. She becomes the mother of four children and it is very difficult to play the role of a 13 years girl to a twenty -eight years woman but Natasha makes this impossible possible.

Anna is a very beautiful and rich woman from St. Petersburg who is the main female character of the novel *Anna Karenina*. She has many adulterous relationships and betrays her husband. She is well-educated and intelligent woman. She is a voracious reader and she writes children's books also. She has innate ability to take advantages of her relationships. She does not believe much in the

social codes. She attracts the attention of the people he meets in her life. She is vehemently in love not only with her lovers but also with her family members. She is a realistic woman who believes in the real relationships. Deviga R. writes about the theme of *Anna Karenina*:

Adultery is another leading theme of the novel which is closely associated with the theme of marriage. It presents several different cases, adultery with diverse motives for commitments has various consequences. The result is objective, sincere aspects of each case becoming exposed. The novel does not present any solutions or answers any questions, what is achieved is a composite picture of the marriage theme. (929)

Katusha's full name is Katerina Maslova who becomes a prostitute driven by the circumstances in the novel *Resurrection*. She was a bastard girl and she was brought up by two generous ladies who give her education also. She had to see adversity in her life. She had to work as a maid servant. She is seduced and impregnated by her employer's nephew, Prince Dmitri Ivanovitch Nekhludoff. When she loses her baby, she becomes a prostitute. When the story of the novel opens, she attempts to murder her abusive client and is sentenced to hard labour in Siberia.

Tolstoy's philosophy of life was to follow the teachings of Jesus because it is the ultimate path to live life. There was hypocrisy and hollowness in church at that time and he wanted to attack on the false institution of marriage and the selfish relationships.

Leo Tolstoy lived in the world where he found that the people say something and do something else in their life. He found that his purpose of life seems to be dwindling as he found that he is facing a phase of deep depression and melancholy in his life even though he had a large estate, nine children who survived and much money. He could not get satisfaction from his life.

The foundation of his fame not only rests upon major novels but also on his philosophical works which are the strong documents on life. His work *My Confession* (1879) is about the Christian faith and his religious notions. *What people Live By* (1881) and *What I Believe* (1883) also deal with the philosophical themes such as morality, religion, culture, society, etc.

Leo Tolstoy succeeded to establish himself a spiritual leader, moral guide and religious guru in the last few decades of his life. He was such a great person that even Mahatma Gandhi was highly influenced from his life.

Tolstoy was not merely a writer; he was a person of high values also who created a long list of rules for himself. His wife Sofya helped him a lot in writing and improving the draft of his novel *War and Peace*. It is said that she wrote the manuscript eight times and few sections even thirty times.

Tolstoy's views were very turbulent keeping in view the society and the extra-marital relationships become the cause of unhappiness for the people. He rejected the religious rituals, attacked on the functioning of the state and devised new property rights due to which he was kept in the police surveillance and the Orthodox Russian Church excommunicated him in 1901.

Tolstoy did not earn much acclaim in Russia at that time because his views were not accepted and digested by the people but he started getting worldwide recognition immediately. Tolstoy's married life, like Socrates, brings many disastrous experiences in his life. It is held that Though Sofya helped Tolstoy in his literary endeavours, yet it was an incompatible match.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Leo Tolstoy has spirituality, family happiness, infidelity, love-affair, death, etc. themes in his life. His works are the mixture of spiritual quest, marital bliss, adultery and mutual relationships. Tolstoy's writing style is also very impressive and his thoughts are very deep. He is a living legend through his writings. Deviga R. writes about him:

Tolstoy urges to portray natural life in its true color. Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina* drew an artistically sensitive picture of Russia at the end of the 19th and dwelt on such pressing contemporary issues as these connected to agrarian reforms, the birth of capitalism, the marriage institution and diverse law, the moral judgement of adulteries... in other words Tolstoy was concerned with the most burning problems of community of that time. (930)

Works Cited

- Deviga R. "Marriages and adultery in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*." *International Journal of Advance Research, Ideas and Innovations in Technology* 4.4 (2018). www.IJARIIT.com
- Morson, Gary Saul. *Anna Karenina in Our Time: Seeing More Wisely*. New York: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Sharma, T. R. ed. *Essays on Leo Tolstoy*. Meerut: Salabh Prakashan 1989.
- Tolstoy, Leo. "What is Art? And Essays on Art." London. Oxford University Press, 1942.
- . *Anna Karenina*. London and New York, Routledge, 1988.
- . *Resurrection*. London: OUP, 1979.
- . *War and Peace*. London: Wordsworth Classics, 1999.