



VENGEANCE AND WICKEDNESS IN EMILY BRONTE'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Dr.Kakasaheb Dhondiba Dhaygude

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Sant Ramdas Arts, Commerce & Science College,

Ghansawangi, Dist. Jalna. (M.S.) India

Abstract

Emily Jane Bronte or Ellis Bell is one of the prominent literary personalities of English word. Although her contribution in fiction writing is quite limited, her only work takes her to the world of recognition and large-scale appreciation. Like all the Bronte sisters, she right from the childhood develops close affinity and liking for natural objects like mountains, moors, rivers and dales. Her whole childhood is spent in the barren and uncultivated uplands in which she enjoyed the natural beauty in its lap. As a close observer of nature with its serene as well as devastating phenomena she feels comfortable in the virgin landscapes which are quite away from the urban complexities. She moves merrily in the uplands with her sisters. Her close association with nature is found everywhere in her only fictional work. She gets immense pleasure in wandering aimlessly in the meadows, trees and bushes. Her family also accompanies her in the wandering, as most of her family members are nature lovers. They also motivate and inspire the next generation for the natural expeditions. She never experiences the modern parental restrictions as the siblings, Emily and Anne move into the company of the nature. In the company of nature they are free as the breeze that flows from the meadows. The Bronte kids enjoy all the pristine beauties of nature; they are as free as the breeze that blows from the meadows. Even the elders enjoy the rambling along with their kids. The vast moor always beckons them and the children take no time in attending the call of nature and its magical objects.

Key words: compassion, cruelty, diabolic, hatred, love, nature, etc.

Introduction

Emily Bronte's only masterpiece i.e. *Wuthering Heights* takes her in the line of renowned English novelists. Many fiction writers have to establish themselves as excellent novelist by writing many works but Emily Bronte achieves it in single throw. Although she contributes poetry, her real fame rests on the novel i.e. *Wuthering Heights*. She not only becomes a prominent literary figure of English but her work also translated into many languages. It is the testimony of the success of the novelist who achieves excellence in writing of which it is a dream for others. There are positive as well as negative reviews and comments on this novel but one thing is sure that the work despite of its eulogizing the darker side of human being achieves important place in literary outputs. This work is strange, original as well as unique in arousing fear and pity among readers. The sufferings of the characters arouse sympathy among the readers and it is the power of the novelist who succeeds in creating sympathy even for the diabolic character like Heathcliff. It is because of the various elements like love, vengeance, cruelty and compassion the work becomes unique piece of literary work which never loses its popularity even in the modern times.

The book presents the emotions and feelings of a rogue or villain who enjoys the suffering of others and the portrayal of such a wicked person in such an excellent way attests the creativity of the novelist. Despite of the unfriendly criticism and adverse reviews the novel is read all over the world. It has a well-knit plot and the novelist succeeds in keeping the readers' interest throughout the fiction. She makes the events of her fictions much interesting that the reader wants to finish it in a single sitting. The events of this work mostly revolve around the central character Heathcliff, an orphan who was lying on the roadside from where Mr. Earnshaw a noble soul takes him to the *Wuthering Heights* which is his residence. Mr. Earnshaw's act of taking the child to his home shows the nobility of his heart. He is the man who has his son and daughter still

shows the mercy to the child. But the warmth of Earnshaw is absent in his other family members as they do not like his decision. The novelist says:

Earnshaw pets and favours him, and in doing so creates fresh inequities in the family hierarchy which became the source of Hindley's hatred. An heir to the Heights, Hindley understandably feels his social role subverted by this irrational, unpredictable intrusion. (*Wuthering Heights*, 29)

It shows the coldness on the part of these persons who do not understand the feeling of their own family members. Earnshaw family consists of Hindley, the son of Mr. Earnshaw and Catherine is his daughter. There is another female character that plays crucial role in the major events of the novel and that person is Nelly who is the family maid. Besides his wife Mrs. Earnshaw the whole family except Mr. Earnshaw does not like his decision. But it does not make any difference to him; he treats the orphan as his own child. This excessive care and attachment become major cause of the dislike among the rest of the family members towards Heathcliff. But the chain of misfortune which is somewhat broken for a short time still continues as the noble person Mr. Earnshaw leaves the world. With the departure of this man, all the happiness withers away. Now the envy and hatred of the family members towards this boy erupt and they start humiliating and maltreating the boy. Now Hindley takes the charge of all the family matters and intensifies the brutalities against the boy. The once favourite of senior Earnshaw reduces to a mere slave after his benefactor's death. The brutal and wicked treatment can be seen when Hindley forces him for manual jobs in his farm. He is taken away from school and asks him to work like a laborer. This brutal treatment is never approved by his own sister, Catherine who inwardly develops warmth for this child in her heart. Right from the day Heathcliff enters into the household he becomes her friend and enjoys each other's company and ramblings on the uncultivated region and plains. Catherine gets attracted towards him and does not think of living without him. He also reciprocates positively towards Catherine's advances and enjoys her company in their field and farm. But Catherine never shows her disapproval openly towards her brother's inhuman treatment. This mercilessness on the part of Hindley sows the seeds of vengeance in Heathcliff's mind. The helpless and orphan boy decides to take revenge on Hindley in future. He tolerate all the maltreatment, hardships and harassment for time being and becomes more ruthless when he gets the favourable time to score the past insult and exploitation.

Emily Bronte presents the contrast between the lifestyle and character traits of two families. Her portrayal of Linton family which stays at Thrushcross Grange shows that the world is not utterly polluted; there are human beings like the Linton family members who are kind and compassionate. They are totally different from that of the Earnshaw family. They are honest and well educated and cultured people who never approve the exploitation of the persons like Heathcliff at the hands of Hindley. Emily Bronte's description of this family also suggests that there is tranquility and serenity at The Thrushcross Grange. The house is well built and ventilated and it is excellent one. The members have great family feelings among its members. The readers realise that the members of Linton family are more courteous, caring and loving which can be exhibited in the incident when Catherine in her childhood accidentally comes under the attack of a dog as she was wondering around the Thrushcross Grange. Although she was attacked by a dog she is taken into the Linton house where she was given treatment and rest. This incident shows that the Lintons are more caring and hospitable than that of Earnshaw. Heathcliff and Catherine are wandering on the moors and Catherine gets dog bite and she is allowed to take rest at Linton's residence but this cultured family also show some kind of prejudice towards the child who is an orphan. The ignorance by the sophisticated family shows the deep rooted distrust towards the child who is from moderate or unknown background. The humiliation by the Linton enrages the child who decides to payback in future. The series of humiliation from the civilized and less civilized ones become responsible for the future complexities. The man who is thirsty of love never receives what he urges in his whole life.

Heathcliff has romantic relationship with Catherine and both of them accept it but the girl disappoints him, she loves him but she dreams Edgar as her future husband. Although Catherine does this to protect her lover, he infers negative from it and leaves the *Wuthering Heights* without meeting Catherine. His immediate departure without taking into confidence of the girl to whom he loves dearly shows some sentimental nature of Heathcliff. He never bothers to talk to Catherine as he makes up his mind that Catherine's rejection is because of his background. This misunderstanding becomes the major factor in his brutalities towards all the members of Earnshaw family. Now Catherine marries to Edgar Linton who is of her equal status and the man burning in vengeance and frustration moves to unknown place. Emily Bronte makes a major shift in the action of the novel. Heathcliff now becomes a totally different man in three years. The novelist never talks about the three years and the whereabouts of the central character Heathcliff. Now he returns to the place where he was humiliated and maltreated. Due to some tragic events Hindley becomes disappointed and turns to gambling and large consumption of alcohol. It provides an opportunity to the man who wants to take revenge on the man who has maltreated him for many years. He holds the man responsible for all his woes and frustration.

He also encourages Hindley for more gambling and heavy drinking which makes his task much easier as the debt-ridden man cannot afford the expensive addiction. The gambling finally takes its toll and Heathcliff becomes sole owner of the Earnshaw property. He devises such wicked plans to uproot the man who disturbed him right from his childhood. The novelist through gambling and heavy drinking acquaints the readers with its evil consequences. The revenge is such a cruel feeling which blinds human being and he or he forgets everything. Heathcliff also forgets that despite of his maltreatment, it is the family which has provided shelter to an orphan like him. He becomes an utter fiend when he decides to unsettle the civilized and loving family of Lintons. He is quite enraged because of Catherine's marriage to Edgar. He becomes so brutal that he makes use of every person of Earnshaw and Linton family for the retribution. He even succeeds in marrying Isabella who is not aware intentions. He managed this marriage with the evil intention of vengeance. It is an act of his reprisal against his maltreatment. He never accepts her as his wife and she always remains an ignored entity. He makes her life so pathetic and miserable that there remains only one option for her and that is to leave her wicked husband. He becomes so ruthless that he does not spare the children of Earnshaw and Linton family.

He treats his son Hareton in a very wicked way he tries to spoil the child by familiarizing with the slangs and bad words. His deep-rooted retribution totally blinds him, now he becomes a complete fiend who never bothers about human feelings like love, compassion and kindness. His fury never cools down and he makes plans after plans to destroy the whole Linton and Earnshaw family. He as we know that becomes the master of wuthering heights and the property of the Earnshaw family by encouraging Hindley towards uncontrolled addiction of gambling and drinking. He now spreads his wicked arms towards the Linton family to seize their property. Catherine Linton is the only legal heir of Linton family and he decides to take hold of the Linton property by developing matrimonial relations among of his son and Catherine Linton. Here destiny plays a crucial role which ultimately results into the frustrating of Heathcliff's plan to seize the Linton property. Because of the persistent maltreatment from Heathcliff that his son does not enjoy good health and before materializing his father's dream, he bids adieu to the world and from the iron clutches of the diabolic man. His unscrupulousness is visible throughout all his acts where he does not spare even the children and bedridden persons. He lives only to quench his desire of retribution.

Despite of all the dark side of his character, Heathcliff has shown by the novelist as a true lover. His emotions towards Catherine are real as well as pure, he never thinks of vengeance in Catherine's case. After a certain period of time the feelings of vengeance wither away from his mind. At the end of this his life he becomes a satisfied person. When he finds that the younger generation enjoy its life and it is the happiness of younger generation at last succeeds in the in purging his wickedness. He finds the contentment and fulfillment of his unfulfilled desire in Catherine and Hareton. The way these two youngsters move into the moor provides him much needed solace to his disturbed soul.

In this way Emily Bronte presents the turbulence of the life of an individual which makes him a villain. The novelist's presentation of the serene and disturbed conditions through the dwellings of Earnshaw and Linton family show the commotion and future upheavals that are going to take place in their surroundings. The mysterious and impish person like Heathcliff also ultimately listens to the emerging conscience which is shown through the younger generation's merry making and reunion.

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