

## EDDIE OF ARTHUR MILLER'S A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE IS A MODERN TRAGIC HERO

### Article Particulars

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### Abstract

*Tragedy has always been considered as a highest form of literature as compare to comedy. Tragic hero, since the birth of the Tragedy, has remained unchanged, but in the Twentieth century the modern playwrights gave us a new kind of Tragic Hero, which we could call as Modern Tragic Hero.*

**Keywords:** *Tragedy, Tragic Hero, Modern Tragic Hero*

### Introduction

Tragedy, though a part of drama, has played a vital role in defining Western Civilization through the Ages. Tragedy originated in Ancient Greece some 2500 years ago, playwright, then, was Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In Elizabethan Era Christopher Marlow, William Shakespeare and others based their tragedies on Greek tragedy. All the tragedies, we can say, are based on the Greek Tragedy, with minor deviation here and there. The concept of Tragedy we get in Greek Philosopher Aristotle's Poetics. Aristotle has defined tragedy thus:

Tragedy, the, is a representation of an action, that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to the several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions. (Thorat: 69)

### Arthur Miller (1915-2005)

A Twentieth Century American playwright, considered to be the greatest playwright, of course, after Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams. He deliberately concentrated upon the Tragedy as Eugene O'Neill focused upon place of Man in the Modern rapidly changing world and Tennessee Williams on declined status of the White

people in the Twentieth Century. His tragedies are social tragedies. He based most of his tragedies on Greek tragedies not on Shakespeare or Marlow's. His famous tragedies are: *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View from the Bridge* (1955).

### **Modern Hero**

Modern Hero, who is he? That is a very debatable question, it's hard define the Modern Hero. But he was confused in the Twentieth Century as he had seen Two World Wars, Nazi brutality, Great Depression, scientific changes. In the same period most of the countries had accepted democracy. Thus Miller, too, in his *Tragedy and the Common Man* says that 'common man can be as 'noble' as kings'. Miller also argues that the world is full of heroes and people do not care about the social status or the Background of the hero. In the Old Dramas Oedipus, Hamlet, Lear were the heroes, but they are irrelevant in today's world. But to the modern audiences the death has become meaningless, after seeing so many deaths in the WW I & II, in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and Suffering in Great Depression and in Stalin's Russia. Thus it became meaningless for the people to see the suffering of Noble hero in a drama. Thus Miller, being aware of this fact, [deliberately] chose his tragic heroes from middle class-so that rather than becoming the tragedy of individual it becomes the tragedy of society. There are so many like him in the society.

### **Aristotle's Concept of Tragic Hero**

According to Aristotle Tragic hero must be,

- a) Generally good; he should not be faultless or pre-eminently good so as to vie with angels and gods. This would not excite sympathy or pity that he demands. he should be morally good
- b) From distinguished family or a person of high rank.
- c) Appropriate; the character must be true to his type, his class, status. By status he meant 'political status' and 'social status'.
- d) Above ordinary person.
- e) Real or life-like; he should be, despite high rank, human as we are.
- f) Consistent; his action, behavior, speech, emotions, should be consistent with one another; if he happens to be inconsistent, he must be consistently inconsistent.
- g) In possession of Hamartia; he must possess a conscious and unconscious flaw which brings about his tragedy. An error of judgement.
- h) Subjected to reversal of fortune; he must slide from a status of prosperity to deplorable misfortune. This reversal result from a discovery or a recognition or both- he must move from ignorance to knowledge and suffer pain.

### **Eddie as a Modern Tragic Hero**

*A View from the Bridge* is considered one of the finest Tragedy of Arthur Miller. It revolves around the life of Eddie Corbone, a longshoreman. Though he is a tragic hero,

but he is not a traditional tragic hero like Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet or like King Lear. Miller, it seems, slightly differed from Aristotle's concept of Tragic Hero in following ways:

1. Eddie does not belong to the high social class or distinguished family, he belongs to the middle class, he is a mere worker of a port and does not possess any distinguishable qualities of traditional Tragic Hero as expected by the Aristotle.
2. Eddie is not morally good, as he longs for Catherine, his niece. He wanted Catherine for himself.
3. But he is good nature as he gives shelter to Marcho and Rodolpho in his house and treats Catherine as his daughter, as well. This quality of Eddie makes him above ordinary people.
4. He is appropriate to his class. He has qualities of longshoreman. He fears that if Catherine mingle with other men she would forget him, therefore he protects her from the outside world. He is possessive of Catherine. As he is uneducated he goes to Alfieri for advice.
5. Eddie is consistent in his actions. He, till his death, opposes the marriage of Catherine and Rodolpho. He does not listens to Beatrice, his wife and Alfieri, who advices him that he cannot have Catherine and he cannot prevent the marriage. Still he does not let go his desire to have Catherine.
6. Excessive passions for Catherine is the tragic flaw of Eddie. Due to this passion he calls to the Immigration Office and snitches about Marcho and Rodolpho, that was his error of judgement.
7. Eddie falls from respect to the hatred. In the beginning of the play everyone respects him, Beatrice, Catherine, Marcho and Rodolpho. For Catherine his consent was necessary to accept the job. Marcho and Rodolpho they also respect him as he gives them shelter in his house. But his decline starts from the boxing scene, where he punches Rodolpho. And everyone starts hating him when he snitches to the Immigration Office. Though there was no evidence against Eddie, still everyone believes that it was Eddie, who might have snitched.
8. There is a basic difference between Traditional Tragic Hero and Eddie that is, that we do not feel pity and sympathy for Eddie when he dies. All the Modern Tragic Heroes are of low morals or ethics.

## Conclusion

Thus we could say that Miller's Tragic Heroes slightly differs from the Aristotle's concept of Tragic Hero. His Heroes, mostly, are from middle class background, so that audiences or readers could relate to the hero. The issues discussed in his plays are the issues of common people not of high rank or aristocratic people. In changed social scenario tragedy needed a new hero or modern hero. Thus we could say that Eddie is a modern tragic hero of modern tragedy.

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