

A Thematic Study of Graham Green's *A Shocking Accident*

Dr. Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu

Associate Professor, Department of English
KoneruLakshmaiah Education Foundation
(Deemed to be University)

Vaddeswaram, Guntur – 522502, A.P.

bsivanagaiah@gmail.com

&

Aravind Kola

Research Scholar, Department of English
KoneruLakshmaiah Education Foundation
(Deemed to be University)

Vaddeswaram, Guntur – 522502, A.P.

Graham Green (1904 - 1991) is an English novelist, short story writer, playwright and journalist. He is considered one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. He is adored for his simple writing style of using easy words and uncomplicated descriptives and narratives making it easy for understanding of readers. His writings portray moral and spiritual disposition of people in the contemporary political background. Though Green had produced several entertainers and thrillers, he had a strong portrayal of religious sentiments in the background. His writings give importance to psyche of the characters than the plots. Emotional and spiritual turmoil of the characters are highly portrayed, giving importance to the inner world of the character rather than to their surroundings. His list of well-known and well-loved works is very long. But *Brighton Rock* (1938) is considered his finest work. Several of his works are adapted into films, and several of them are adapted more than once. He has been shortlisted for Nobel prize for two times in 1966 and 1967.

As told earlier as his striking feature of writing, to portray the inner struggle of a character, the present story “A Shocking Accident” is presents the inner feelings of a son

regarding the death of his father. The story is very short in terms of its plot. But it is all construed and pervaded with the flow of inner struggle, ruminations and reflections of main character Jerome, as a child, teen and a young man, regarding death of his father, killed by a out-of-blue pig falling upon him from a skyscraper.

Jerome was a nine year old kid when his father died. Jerome's father is a widower and writer by profession and travels around the world. But Jerome assumes him to be a secret agent in British government. Jerome is informed by the housemaster of his school about his father's death stating the cause as just a 'street accident' instead of real cause - a pig fell on him from a skyscraper while he was walking on the roads of Naples. Peculiarly, Jerome didn't exhibit any grieving reaction when he was told about his father's death. But he thought that his father might have been dead by bullet shots in some firing while he was on his duty and this cause of 'street accident' is just to conceal his identity as a secret agent. A question-thought conceived at the moment and lingering in his mind, blurts out immediately - "Did they shoot him through the heart?" (Green). Annoyed by the behaviour of Jerome, the housemaster discloses the real reason of pig one. But while disclosing it, "An inexplicable convulsion took place in the nerves of Mr Wordsworth's face" (Green). 'Pig' being the reason of death, brought a laugh inside Mr. Wordsworth, instead feeling sorry for Jerome and consoling him. Green tries to portray the naive and imaginative fancy world of kids through Jerome in his belief that his father is a secret agent and in also Jeromes was emotional passiveness when he was informed about his father's death.

Not until Jerome reaches into his early teens, he understood the inappropriate and contrary action of Mr. Wordsworth, in feeling his father's death comical. "It was later, in his first

term at his public school, when he told the story to his best friend, that he began to realize how it affected others” (Green). This shows the development of Jerome’s mind in understanding things. But Jerome’s friend too feels his father’s death comical. And several other friends of his too feel his father’s death to be a comical one for pig being a cause of it. They start to tease him calling a ‘pig’ - “after that disclosure he was known, rather unreasonably, as Pig” (Green). It has started becoming difficult for Jerome to accept his peer’s attitude towards his father’s death. This resulted in a mental turmoil which continued for a long time in his heart and mind regarding his father’s death. He dislikes to share about the reason of his father’s death to others and also when he hears his aunt describing it to others.

To change the people’s attitude towards his father’s death, Jerome tried to make slight changes in the story of death. “Sometimes he rehearsed the method of recounting his father’s death so as to reduce the comic element to its smallest dimensions - it would be of no use to refuse information” as his aunt would however reveal the true narration of death (Green). He could not change the people’s attitude and his mental discomfort continued. It became more difficult for him when he had to reveal to Sally, the girl whom he got engaged. Jerome develops great affection towards her. He deliberately conceals his father’s death to her. He was filled with apprehensions “whether this quiet love of his would survive if Sally were so insensitive as to laugh when she heard the story of his father’s death” (Green). But when Sally learns about her father-in-law’s death from Jerome’s aunt, to the surprise of Jerome, Sally reacts unexpectedly in different manner to all the people who did before.

“And then the miracle happened. Sally sat with open eyes of horror while his aunt told her the story, and at the end, 'How horrible,' Sally said. 'It makes you think, doesn't it? Happening like that. Out of a clear sky.' ” (Green)

Jerome hears for the first time someone reacting sympathetically and sensibly towards his father's death. He feels very elated to see his father's death not treated comically. When Sally asks about the pig fell on his father, he even cracks a joke answering “They almost certainly had it for dinner”.

Graham Green tries to depict the mental turmoil of an individual when sensitive incidents of an individual are ridiculed. He gives the glimpse of walk of agony everyday these individuals tread on in their lives. Green beautifully portrays how this insensitive treatment from others change the people through Jerome, who was once happy and confident child in life to an unhappy and resigning-to-self individual.

References

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