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The Poetics of Human Suffering in Anton Chekhov's Tragedies

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By

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Letter of Approval

This thesis by Kalyan Koirala, entitled **"The Poetics of Human Suffering in Anton Chekhov's Tragedies**,**"** submitted to the Central Department of English, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

In spite of many critics' claim that Anton Chekhov's tragedies have uniquely new styles and issues of writing, this research studies his noted tragedies *Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard* as strongly deferential to the poetics of human suffering found in tragedies written so far in terms of their styles of setting, plot, characterization, dialogue, and other elements of tragedy. In other elements, it mainly observes in them the philosophical concepts, contemporary aesthetic movements, and use of the figuratives Chekhov's simultaneously and diligently exercised.

Contents

I. . IntroductionIntroduction: Around Anton Chekhov and His Tragedies

"I am a cat but yet I have no name" (Soseki 23).

"David Greybear had the most beautiful eyes of them all, large and lustrous, set wide apart. They somehow expressed his whole personality, his serene self-confidence, his inherent dignity" (Goodall 428).

Besides human, arts often advocate the right and sensibilities of animals or have animals themselves the characters. Natsume Soseki's cat above struggles for his identity and existence among middle-class Japanese society. Likewise, Jane Goodall studies personalities and emotions of chimpanzees like David Greybear in her essay. She attributes human nouns and pronouns to monkeys. We've also observed Picasso's paintings or many poems which portray arrogant bulls or peace-loving birds. But are arts studied by these animals? A dumb question. We know that arts are created to be solely read, learnt, enjoyed, or interpreted by humans only even if they have human, non-human, animate, or inanimate characters. A river or a parrot never knows what's being written on it; a dog does not stop to reflect why he's following a man in a painting. Why are arts written? Why do they invent human or non-human characters?

Paintings or architectures, poetry or fictions, dramas or movies, essays or articles; the common purpose of all arts is basically only one: to bring up human related issues and teach humans? Issues always are and should be moral or ethical. That is, humans have their social rituals and beliefs, education, and experiences of the earth they live in. In its optimum condition, art envisions an order or new establishment in the society and in its environment. That is, arts seek how man can become richer and happier, how he can balance the ecosystem he's sheltering or why he needs to respect a fellow human, or a fellow creature and their habitats. But the reality is rather dictated by inexperience, pride, politics, or a sort of parochialism,

thereby can never reach the ideal state. Arts capture these loopholes in our day to day living and attempt to correct them so that the living can go a bit easier and better. The actions and characters arts invent become a virtual experience for us. Their victories or sacrifices teach us to judge them and behave in our life with a lesson from them.

In a way, arts proffer a struggle between wicked a virtuous characters or forces, or between traditional and avant-garde views. People perhaps would not study James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Devkota's *Lunatic* or they would not be the spectators of Camus' *The Just* or Upriti's drama *Ghanachakkar*, had their protagonists not have any struggle with the prevailing systems or an incessant search for an elevated life of individual, society or environment they inhabit. What make them struggle or search? The ancient answer to this is 'hubris' or the pride and responsibility of a learned or experienced character. The major character has his built in view of life. This principle can be maximumly not absolutely correct for a voice of change. Now, in a comedy like *Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, the voice gets an additional support and brings about a new level of understanding and practice, while in tragedy, the character's blindness or ignorance of the unseen also partially due to his hamartia victimizes himself or herself.

However, the unknown or hazard forces are far too much on the earth. They crush human efforts into dry sand. Or the old system is so gripping that the individual must be the martyr of his values due to his mirror tragic flaw or hubris. In this sense, tragedies seem closer to most human experiences and sufferings than comedies do. Tragedy can also be in a canvas art though - needn't necessity be written in words. To put it differently, the occurrences of tragedies are more frequent and inevitable to reality than the solution and satisfaction meeting comedies. Tragedies have become the closest genre to human experiences.

At this, what's a major character in tragedy? How's hubris developed in him and how does it lead to suffering? The main character is the main responsibility-bearer of the problem in a tragedy. Aristotle defines him as an above-the-average kind of personality who has more virtues and fewer vices. He/She must have certain mature principles of life before the climax. With the notions, he involves in some activities and rescinds others. In doing this, he also uses his immediate experience and defieds the far-fetched divine warnings and superstitious concepts. But, a single protagonist's moral purpose isn't absolute or sufficient against those shapeless vices. In that too, the character can't be 100% blameless for being a human. Aristotle writes that his "misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity but by some error or frailty" (56). This says his error of judgment or hubris itself joins with the vices to gradually bring disintegration or death in him despite his moral virtues. Aristotle further writes that "events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when at the same time, they follow as cause and effect" (55). To be in cause-effect chain is to have logical relations between the character's actions and thoughts, and the resultant events. It shows one's pride leads to his/her downfall, thereby causing both fear and pity in the spectators.

To add up, Hegel's concept of tragic suffering as distinguished from mere suffering is important to note. According to Raymond Williams' report, Hegel says famine, illness, loss of property, or natural or disastrous deaths are only the instances of mere sufferings. There must be human cause for tragic suffering. Hegel's view is that a complex tragedy displays tragic suffering "suspended over active characters entirely as the consequence of their own act" (R. Williams 32). So, there must be "ethical substance" according to Hegel to bring about the misfortune, not any external forces beyond human's cause or reason. So, the suffering in any great tragedy must at

least partially be the result of the protagonist's hubris. This hamartia is unknowns to the character himself or herself. When he/she knows it, s/he may regret upon.

When we observe tragedies by Anton Chekhov, we find such tragic flaws or hamartia in his protagonists. In *Uncle Vanya*, Vanya repents that he's fired at the old professor Serebryakov in a hot temper. With guilt, he submerges into work to find solace. In *The Cherry Orchard*, Mrs. Ranevsky is very sorry of herself for spending money like water and for not being able to sense the inevitable change of the society as a whole into the business age. Her inadaptability to the middle and business class people becomes her major tragic flaw leading her to lose her birth-land. Tragic flaw is seen in the protagonists of all Chekhovian plays, but a bit more complexly. We'll later study in depth how their hubris leads them to suffering and death and what their losses and sacrifices teach us about the nature of human struggle, hubris, and tragic sufferings.

Anton Chekhov as a Dramatist

"Medicine is my legal spouse, while literature is my mistress. When I get tired with one, I go and sleep with the other" (Fen 17). –Anton Chekhov

Anton Chekhov's own term mistress shows his extra-marital affair, i.e. literature, was much sweeter to him than his consolatory profession as a famous doctor. Nevertheless, Chekhov's tragedy writing matured only after his family-poverty-alleviating career as a short stories and one-act vaudevilles writer.

Grown up to a bankrupt grocer-father in Taranrog, Russia and so forced to move to Moscow, Chekhov chose to write many serious stories and frivolous one-act farces apart from his study, apprenticeship, and profession in medicine. "I live on the charity of my *Bear*," (Fen 19) the 1889 Chekhov said a year after he had written *The Bear* about a money-lender who first hounds a young widow, but becomes so impressed with her strong defends and acceptance to a duel that he then proposes her

to marriage. Other farcical sketches by Chekhov were *The Marriage Proposal, An Unwilling Martyr, The Wedding,* and *A Jubilee.* Concurrently, in more than 800 short stories, most of them are world famous now, Chekhov has championed "the holy of holies […] love and the most absolute freedom imaginable […] freedom from violence, lies, whatever their form" in his own words (*Letters* 731-32).

Writing one-act plays must have prepared Chekhov as a serious writer of tragedies, though between frequent successes and failures. *Ivanov* (1887), Chekhov's first full-length play, a fairly immature work compared to his later ones, was first a failure. Chekhov had to revise it in 1889, reflecting himself in many ways with the protagonist, to make it successful. *The Wood Demon* (1889), also a failure at Alexandrine Theatre in St. Petersburg, got metamorphized into *Uncle Vanya* almost a decade later for its applauding production at Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) in the spring of 1899.

It's said *The Seagull* (1896), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903) are the most important plays of Chekhov's life. However, *The Seagull* in St. Petersburg gave Chekhov himself a bitter tragedy of its sheer failure with mid-play laughter, hissing, and jeers by the audiences. Chekhov, who had also directed the production and was present on the release, left the theatre so agonized that he walked the night-streets until two o'clock the next morning and vowed never to write for the stage.

Really, Chekhov didn't write until *The Seagull* was a resounding success in 1898 at MAT this time. The reasons were different. MAT was a newly formed theatre company by Constantine Stanislavsky, Russia's most famous actor-manager, and Nemirovich-Danchenko, himself a playwright. Further *The Seagull* had rejected most theatrical conventions, begun "in forte and finished […] pianissimo" (Fen 21) in

Chekhov's own words. Actually, the play itself concentrates so heavily on the experiences of creative and performing artists - two actresses and two writers. Danchenko knew the failure was due to the inadequacy of pre-existing theatres to give a fresh and intelligent approach. Treplev, the young playwright in the drama itself says, "What we need is new kind of theatre. New forms are what we need. And if we haven't got them, we would be a sight better off with nothing at all" (70).

At MAT *The Seagull* not only gave Chekhov a hope for the theatre but also an actress-wife named Olga Knipper. After he had observed her role of Irina in the play, Chekhov reflected it as "[…] superb. Her voice, noble bearings, and sincerity are so good that it brought a lump to my throat […]. If I remained in Moscow, I should fall in love with that Irina" (Fen 24). In May 1901, a few months after the first night of *Three Sister,* Knipper was his spouse to solace him from his failing health due to tuberculosis, and to inspire him move to playwrighting.

However, it took time for the audiences to gradually accept *Uncle Vanya* and *Three Sisters* as they had newer styles in themes and techniques. *Three Sisters*, for instance, has four heroines; and the spirit, as Chekhov himself said, is "more gloomy than gloom itself" (Fen 27). The main theme of *Three Sisters* is "provincial frustration" (Hingley XIX). None of the main characters can escape the encroaching village environment and meet their successful dreamy lives in Moscow. Andrew Prozorov cherishes he was a professor in Moscow but happens to be the municipal councillor. The three girls are disappointed in love: Olga regrets being an old-maid and Masha has married a wrong man; Irina's fiancé - unloved at that - who she wishes to go to Moscow with the next day, is killed in a duel in Act Four. Observing them closely, Richard Hingley writes, "Olga dislikes being a school-mistress, Masha dislikes being a school-master's wife, Irina dislikes working in a post-office" (XIX),

all of whose burning ambitions would fulfil only when they could return to Moscow, their childhood home. Further, “these unhappy, ill-recognized women are contrasted with their vulgar, insensitive, selfish sister-in-law, Natasha” who is converting the Prozorov family into the “opposite of a home” (XIX).

Certainly, Chekhov is indebted a lot to the loving pressure by his new spouse Olga Knipper in writing the last but most famous of his works *The Cherry Orchard*, despite his deteriorating health. In a letter to Olga, Chekhov had written that the play would be “funny, very funny” (Fen 33) but came out to be interpreted as equally serious in its treatment to the turn-of-the-century issue of Russia. The Student-lover Trofimov speaks to Anya the clear issue of the play:

> Just think Anya. Your grandfather, your great grandfather, and all your ancestors owned serfs, they owned human souls. Don’t you see that from every cherry tree in the Orchard, from every leave and every trunk, men and women are gazing at you? If we are to start living in the present, […] we have first got to redeem our past and make a clean break with it? (269)

But her mother Madam Ranevsky and Uncle Gayev are inadaptable to the new capitalistic upsurge of the then Russia and so lose their land to Lopakhin, a son of their erstwhile serf: “I bought the estate on which my grandfather and father were slaves, where they were not even permitted in the kitchen” (282). More decently, Lopakhin is not a “mere money grubber but one who thinks deeply while walking” (*Letters* 732). He first suggests that Ranevsky change her orchard into summer cottages for tourists so that she could pay off her debts, and takes action only when she seems incorrigible to the change that’s inevitable.

The Cherry Orchard, premiered on the 44th birthday of Chekhov on January-17, 1904, was also attended by him after Act-Three and received a fervent applause. But, he stood there coughing and obviously ill. Coincidently, he was addressed "dear and most honoured book-case." So, it happened that as Gayev's book-case, Chekhov also had to be sent back to the Nature so that other new artists could be born after him. A long-term patient of tuberculosis, he died of double heart-attacks only six months later in Germany after he had drunk champagne and made a humorous story on the death-bed to make Olga Knipper laugh wholeheartedly.

So, it were MAT productions that first brought Chekhov a great fame as one of the most distinguished modern playwrights of Russia and the world. However, he was never quite happy with the styles that director Constantine Stanislavsky imposed on his plays. Especially, while Chekhov insisted that his plays were comedies, Stanislavsky's productions tended to focus in tragic elements in them. Most recent interpretations also show that his plays in depth are real tragedies. The meanings are not radically different from Chekhov's own though:

> All I want to say honesty to people: 'Have a look at yourselves and see how bad and dreary our lives are!' The important thing is that people should realize that, for when they do, they will most certainly create another and better life for themselves, I will not live to see it, but I know that it will be quite different, quite unlike our present life. (*Letters* 731)

It proves that the study of human condition was the fundamental task, the *lait motif* in Chekhov's plays, where he lavishes deep sympathy on moving characters while sternly withholding it from certain others who have parochial thought and living.

Critics on Anton Chekhov's Plays

Many critics have found Anton Chekhov completely different from his contemporaries, predecessors, and successors in terms of his new dramatic structures, conception of his characters, and implications of his plays. Jointly, he depicts a "stalemate" society where its systems are disintegrating beyond the control of the individuals who rather live only in temporary illusions and slowly get victimized by the stalemate.

In a long way over from modern and Greek tragedies, Chekhov's plays don't have spectacular inter-character conflicts but mental actions in characters' minds that fill the stage. Regarding this, George Steiner in *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) points out that Chekhov explores "an inner space, of an area of social and psychological turbulence midway between the ancient poles of the tragic and the comic" (309). Similarly, RP Draper finds that with Chekhov, "Man is significantly himself in what he says; what he does is nugatory and irrelevant" (Introduction 15-16).

Really, Chekhov has attempted a complete break from the tradition. The outside actions such as the report of the plague by the Priest and the quarrel between Oedipus and Tiresias, for example, are very crucial to develop the theme of *Oedipus Rex*. Or, the last sword fight between Hamlet and Laitre is a major turn showing the reversal of situation and makes the Shakesperean play very spectacular. Outward movements from city to city are very important in them. But, on the contrary, "Chekhov's plays are full of actions" comments Stanislavsky, his contemporary critic and a founder member of Moscow Art Theatre, "not in their external but in their inner development. In the inactivity of his characters, a complex inner activity is concealed" (Fen 7).

Chekhov has rather focussed on the minute details of ordinary living. He himself has told his friends, “Let things happen onstage be as complex and yet as simple as they are in life. For instance, people are having a meal at the table just having a meal, but at the same time, their happiness is being created, or their lives are being smashed up” (Fen19). He asserts that he shows “life and men as they are, and not as they would look if you put them on stilts” (Fen 31). For example, we can see how minutely he constructs the drawing- room scene in *Three Sisters* at Irina’s name-day party and people’s gatherings. We find such homely environment as the major setting in any on his plays. Those settings are totally different from official or royal scenes of many other writers. Remarking on this, Tolstoy once said, “Where does one get with your [Chekhov’s] heroes? From the sofa to the privy and from the privy back to the sofa?” (Hingley XXIV). One can hardly say so to Sophocles’ or Shakespeare’s or Shaw’s.

Chekhov’s issues are certainly not the accidental and specific but the human. Or rather, his dramatic techniques are at times submerged with excessive use of “subtexts” in which “the surface of the dialogue seems innocuous and meandering, but deeper meanings are implied” (Jacobus 705).

In particular, we are revealed of Ranevsky’s idealistic character doomed to suffer from her meandering about her cherished “millstone” from Paris in Act Three of *The Cherry Orchard.* She is also contrasted with Lopakhin’s realistic and purposeful dialogues. On this, Stanislavsky writes, “His dramatic effects are most varied and often unconsciously employed. At times, he’s an impressionist, at times a symbolist; he’s a realist where it’s necessary and occasionally almost a naturalist” (Fen 7). This extends to any later plays of Chekhov. Even in *The Cherry Orchard,* he has used the symbols of a breaking string and the chopping of the cherry trees hinting

the fall of the aristocrats. Also, the symbolic "new art forms" in *The Seagull* spoken by Treplev's character Nina can be cited. The lady stands at the sight of an enigmatic lake and speaks her wild imagination: "the men, the lions, the eagles, the partridges, the antlered deer, the geese, the spiders, the silent fishes of the deep" (74).

Evidently, Chekhov did everything to lose himself free from any influence of the tradition. In a letter to his friend Suvorin (1885), he said of *The Seagull*, "I began it forte and finished it pianissimo, against all the rules of dramatic art" (Fen 22). Of course, in his mature plays, he avoids all exciting dramatic situations. The most important events in the lives of his characters are almost "[…] untheatrical. They are communicated indirectly as if in passing" (Fen 32). Chekhov himself has confessed that it's only "a revolver shot" that he had to compromise with the tradition, but that too, diminishingly. Specifically, while Treplev in *The Seagull* kills himself with it, it's not a suicide but someone else kills Tuzenbakh in *Three Sisters*. In *Uncle Vanya*, it's fired but doesn't kill the professor, while Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* only carries it for his safety. These incidents certainly look far more insignificant if we observe the onstage fights of, say, Shakespearean plays.

What's more, Chekhov has focussed on different aspects of characters' lives. They are significant not in the sense of clear-cut heroism and villainy but, perhaps, in being "honest," honest to work, love, and hope. Obviously, they are modern in being chosen from the ordinary living, but yet they're new from those of other playwrights. Ronald Hingley rightly studies:

> Chekhov's characters are less decisive and effective than he probably considers himself. He or she who feels outclassed and overlawed by an Oedipus or a Clytemnestra, by an Antony or a Cleopatra, by a Faust or a Mephistopheles, can smile condescendingly and affectionately at the

manoeuvres of an Uncle Vanya, a Vershinin, a Lyuba Ranevsky. (XXIX)

Obviously, the differences are many. For one thing, Chekhov's characters are very simple "not heroes and not villains." Jacobus adds "The dramatic concept of a hero who, like Oedipus, is larger than life, or a villain, like De Flores in *The Challenging*, who is essentially a devil, is nowhere to be seen in [Chekhov's] works. [His] characters are limited, recognizable, and in many ways completely ordinary" (706). Illuminating further, Fen quotes a Russian writer to have found Chekhov's characters "quite, unassuring, conscientious and above all modest, with an instinctive dislike of all forms of self-advertisement and self glorification" (16). Definitely, either we observe Uncle Vanya or Ivanov; Andrew, Olga, or Ranevsky, we find the same. In the second place, his characters don't stand on a city square or in a palace but in private drawing rooms. We can see Sarah in *Ivanov*; Olga, Masha, Irina in *Three Sisters*. Yet, these ladies, in Chekhov's, have "all the charms that Ibsen's lack" (Krook 190). Thirdly, Chekhov makes his plays after *Ivanov* "centrifugal," a more democratic approach where he can equally explore the mind of half-a-dozen personages in a play. This technique is totally different from Ibsen, Strindberg, Miller, and others. *Three Sisters* has three heroines balancedly conceived. *The Cherry Orchard* has two protagonists; *The Seagull*, four. Next, the characters' interior lives and psychological forces have been minutely observed and exteriorized, not their public leadership qualities. The characters confess from their intimate mind, their cherished hopes and desires as if they are the autobiographical of Chekhov. Precisely, Dr Astrov in *Uncle Vanya* says, "I love life, but our kind of life, the provincial, dreary, Russian life, I just can't bear; I despite it with all my heart" (138). Or, Masha unhappy of her life with a school-master confesses with her sisters her love to rather

the colonel: “It’s my secret but I want you to know it […] I’m in love with that man […] love Vershinin” (218*).* Naturally, Chekhov’s artistic ingenuity, as Stanislavsky also remarks, lies in his search for “the most intimate moods, in the most secret corners of the human heart” (Fen 8). Lastly, the characters are full of life because they have something to do, something to love, and something to hope for. Treplev always opts for “new forms” in theatrical arts. Vanya and Sonya feel their lives valuable in farm management works. Lebedev loves his permanent friend Nicolas Ivanov at all costs. In almost all of his plays, there’s a character who talks of a bright future ahead for the posterity, for the whole generation. Olga hopes at the end of *Three Sisters:* “Our sufferings bring happiness to those who come after us. Peace and joy will reign on earth” (237).

Moreover, Chekhov is yet different from others in the ways his plays have been interpreted for meanings in them. None of the critics have emphasised actions or ideas the purpose of his mature dramas, but as centred on the characters’ emotions. Harvey Pitcher argues that his plays are essentially of emotional contents, especially the absence of them. Paraphrasing Pitcher’s ideas as expressed in *The Chekhov Play* (1973), Hingley writes:

> Love, hate, rage, jealousy - passions of one kind or another: these are in short supply, except in temporary or muted form. Rather are the prevailing moods, low key, desultory, inconsequential […] chiefly engaged in desultory monitoring of their lives, they lend to offer from time to time torpid running commentaries on their own biographies. They regret mispent opportunities in the past; they voice their aspirations for the future. (XXVI)

In these, Chekhov stands distinguished from many of his contemporaries like Shaw who focuses mainly in awaring the theatregoers about more appropriate and avant-garde social philosophy or forms of government; or Ibsen whose concerns are social status of women in obtaining material successes.

Hingley himself finds "love" very frustrating in Chekhov's characters due to their unmatching interests and moods. It's a low-key attachment of love between Varya and Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard.* In *Uncle Vanya,* Sonya's hopeless love for Astrov is inadequately paralleled by his frustrated feelings for the beautiful Helen. All the three sisters along with Andrew have failures and dissatisfaction in love in *Three Sisters.*

Elisaveta Fen comments that Chekhov's mature plays "reflect his mood of spiritual discouragement, hopelessness before the overwhelming, impersonal forces of circumstances, an awareness of personal insignificance." And the characters "behave and talk as if they have lust their own future" (9). Yet they worship humanity, respect for Man, and for that reason are always tolerant, gentle, courteous, and cooperative. They exhibit tenderness and sympathy over others without loose sentiments, with perfect adultness. Peter Brook, a very famous present-age stage-director, points out, "Death is omnipresent […] but there's nothing negative or unsavoury in its presence. The awareness of death is balanced with a desire to live. His characters possess a sense of the present moment, and the need to taste it fully" (736).

However, according to Raymond Williams, tragedy is irrepressible there since their "sense of the present," "tenderness or sympathy," or "perfect adultness" is but just a temporary trivial control or a mere life in illusion, at the existence of indefeatably stagnant social condition. How much social or charitable the characters are, they get victimized by the stalemate, let beyond to correct it. Focussing on this

new condition of stalemate in Chekhov's tragedies further perverse from the deadlock in Ibsen's, Williams writes: "In a deadlock there is still effect and struggle but no possibility of winning; the wrestler with life dies as he gives his last strength. [But] in a stalemate, there's no possibility of movement or even the effort at movement; every willed-action is itself self-cancelling" (142). Williams sees such a condition surfaces "total illusion" and the victimization turns on the hero himself in any of Chekhov's tragic plays. Ivanov, for example, is a very conscious liberal hero who turns his opposition to a condition of society back on to himself: "At twenty, we are all heroes, we undertake anything, we can do anything; but at thirty we're tired already and good for nothing. Tell me how you explain the way one gets so tired?"(41-42). Through the characters' lives, not the fates of the individuals but a common failure of the whole group, a whole society is dramatized as victims. Williams notes Trigorin in *The Seagull* "floating about in a chaotic world" (89) due to the weight of the guilt of his group. Or, Uncle Vanya senses "a decay due to an unsupportable struggle for existence […] utter irresponsibility" (160). Or, Masha in *Three Sisters* accepts, "Either you know what you're living for or else the whole thing is a waste of time and means less than nothing" (198). And as Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*, they have only aspiration for the future where past is not redeemed and present is not built: "Everything that's unattainable for us now will one day be near and dear, but we must work" (266). But Williams writes, "The energy to work in these societies is consumed by the very effort to conceive it" (45) and only having future expectations is a mere defeat. So the outcome at present results in a tragic breakdown in the death of the characters before the aspired future comes at hand.

Shortly, the major interpretations on Chekhov's plays unravel his primary focus in studying contemporary frustrated human moods against hopeful future

expectations. The heroic characters themselves get victimized by subversive present situations which make the tragedy to be inevitable. And in the techniques, Chekhov is not making his plays carry larger-than-life actions and ideas as many others have done. In this, he's rather closer to Beckett.

The Plan of the Research

So far, we've seen many critics emphasizing in what ways Chekhov seems different and so distinguished from many other playwrights. And, this is very convincing, too, that his plays are new in staging non-action yet unobtrusive plots that explore different moods of non-heroic human characters limited by time and social spaces. The critics have also noticed Chekhov's ability of evoking exquisite settings, subtle use of "noises off," eloquent humours, and deadly balance between the good and the bad. Nevertheless, these interpretations posit some deeper questions: Are Chekhov's tragedies really different from that of others? Do they have some underlying similarities, or not?

This research plans to prove Chekhov's affinity to the tradition of tragedy despite those surfacial variations. To be more precise, his life-like plot-designations, normal human-moulded characters, and subtle blend of symbolism and naturalism are not changes in the devices of tragedy in the real sense, but further historio-cultural improvements to study more accurately the human limitations and frustrations survived by a faint future hope. So, the seemingly-different devices he has used are rather stronger confirmations for the study of common human emotions at depth.

For this end, the researcher in the next part discusses what differing theories on tragedy have yet appeared in the west since the ancient Greeks, and what is always the same in tragedies despite many theatrical, historical, and other changes, so

that a theoretical base could be prepared for the textual analysis of the thesis research in the third part.

II. Tragedy in the West: The Manifest and the Latent

Tragedy the Genre: Evolution and Outline

The world believes the west to have evolved the tragedy from with the Fall of Man itself. Definitely, the talk between Lucifer and Adam in the Garden of Eden could be cited as the prologue to the tragic condition of human, and all the tragedies henceforth on the earth both in life and art could be just the incarnations of the original tragedy due to the search for knowledge. George Steiner puts it in *The Death of Tragedy*, "Oriental art knows violence, grief, and the strokes of natural and contrived distance; the Japanese theatre is full of ferocity and ceremonial death. But the representation of personal suffering and heroism, which we call tragic drama, is distinctive of the western tradition" (3). According to him, tragedy in art began with the ancient Greeks, especially with *Iliad*, their Premier of tragic art and the fall of Troy, the first great metaphor of tragedy in the epic.

Steiner defines tragedy by contrasting it with the Judaic fable of Job. At death, Job has lost 1000s of sheep, oxen, and asses for which he got the double of them by Jehovah the God in Heaven. But tragedy is irreparable. "Where there's compensation," writes Steiner, "there is justice, not tragedy" (4).Tragedy discards all notions that ways of God to man are just and "the order of the Universe and of man's estate is accessible to reason" (4). By contrast, the human protagonist in the tragedy can neither "comprehend nor master the workings of the destiny" (4). Oedipus, in a very good example, is a man of greater intelligence who yet doesn't identify the father he kills and the fated mother he sleeps with. Iliad is also a tragedy because it deals with the "shortness of heroic life, the exposure of man to the murderousness and caprice of the inhuman, and the fall of the city" (5). So, tragedy, as do the Greek poets, believes that the forces which shape or destroy our lives lie outside the

governance of reason or justice. Worse than that "there are around us such daemonic energies which prey upon the soul and turn it to madness or which poison our will so that we inflict irreparable outrage upon ourselves and those we love" (7).

Tragedy can also be opposed to serious drama in the sense that the former begins with the catastrophe that eventually disintegrates the protagonist for which the causes but lie beyond our understanding and reasoning. On the other hand, if the causes are temporal, and the conflict is resolved through some social means, it's only a serious drama. In Steiner's words:

> Tragic drama tells us that the sphere of reason, order, and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge their relevance. Outside or within man is *l'autre*, the "otherness" of the world. Call it what you will: a hidden or malevolent God, blind fate, the solicitations of hell, or the brute fury of our animal blood. It waits for us is ambush at the crossroads. It mocks us and destroys us. In certain rare instances, it leads us after destruction to some incomprehensible repose. (8-9)

Certainly, the rapid growth of science and technology can't alter or diminish the tragic condition of the hero but makes more and more vulnerable. Thucydides has claimed it so long ago: "Our control of the material world and our positive science have grown fantastically," as Steiner quotes it, "But our very achievements turn against us making politics more random and wars more bestial" (6).

So, all the random forces hit human absurdly or even casually. For possibly a very insignificant "tragic flaw" of the characters, they are stricken far in access. For humans, this is very bitter to bear. Cadmus, for instance, utterly protests the doom of

Thebes and his Royal family for a small insult to God. But Dionysus says the curse was predestined and couldn't be averted.

"Yet, in the very access of human suffering lies man's claim to dignity. Powerless and broken, a blind beggar [Oedipus], hounded out of the city, he assumes a new grandeur. Man is ennobled by the vengeful spite or injustice of the God" (Steiner 9-10). Really the protagonist in tragedy - ancient or avant-garde - doesn't surrender to the inimical social or psychological forces against him but rather dies a hero's death, thus luring us to admire him/her for his/ her priority to human dignity over all else. The hero/heroine dies or accepts the suffering and so s/he lives in the never dying tragic art in *Othello* and *Death of a Salesman,* or in *The Seagull* and *Endgame.* Thus, they are both admired and sympathized. Therefore, whether the Greek or Shakespearean; neoclassic, the modern or their contemporary, tragedy is a "fusion of grief and joy, of lament over the fall of man and of rejoicing in the resurrection of his spirit. No other poetic form achieves this mysterious effect" (10)

The Politics of Tragedy: The Manifest Diversity

However, across the major epochs of western literary history, there have appeared many differing views and practices in forms and meanings of tragedies as if the genre is changing with every writer or every movement in arts and so couldn't be defined completely. Here, an attempt has been made in encapsulating those discursive voices that have politicized tragedy a topic of discourse.

The Greek and the Medieval Tragedy

In his seminal work *Poetics* (330 BC?), Aristotle has defined tragedy as "an imitation of action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude" and that is able to arouse "pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions in

the audiences" (53). He has given six constituent elements of a good tragedy: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Spectacle, and Song.

Plot is the first principle and "soul" of tragedy. It's the "arrangement of incidents" (53) with a distinctive beginning, natural flow of events that lead to the middle and the end with no closely probable incident to follow it. Aristotle completely detests the episodic plots: "of all the plots and actions, episodic are the worst" (59). Although no action can separately begin without past causation, T.R. Henn perceives the beginning as "a sort of momentary slack water before the turn of the tide" (9). The beginning of *Hamlet* for example is a period of rest before the appearance of the ghost. Hamlet has gone to Wittenberg and Denmark has got a sufficiently judicious king. A best plot, according to *Poetics*, brings in surprise both the Recognition scene often coincidental with Reversal of the situation. Recognition (anagnorisis) is the protagonist's awareness of some hidden truth and Reversal (peripetia), the opposite outcome of the protagonist's expectation, "a change by which the action veers to its opposite" (55). While yet following the real-life like cause effect continuation, the events must arise in us pity and fear. For Aristotle, *Oedipus Rex* (c.425) by Sophocles is best designed in such complex plot developments.

Aristotle has observed four major characteristics in the Character of tragedy: must be "good," must have great reputation and "propriety," must be "true to life," and must be "consistently inconsistent" (58). Yet, very much like the naturally organized events in the plot, a person of a given "character should speak or act in a given way by the rule either of necessity or probability" (58). The character should have a noble purpose to be "good," having "manly valour" which Aristotle doesn't believe to have in a woman. The character should be true to life or even more beautiful as in a famous painter's portrait. Oedipus, for instance, is not merely a king,

but also a man committed to discovering the truth and ridding the city of the chronic plague. However, the inevitable change in the fate of the tragic hero is also caused by some error of judgement on the part of the hero together with his moira. So, from tragedy we learn how noblest intentions can bring about the direst consequences thus demanding both admiration for human dignity and sympathy for human frailty.

After the main two, Thoughts may involve the expression of clear issues and appropriate arguments, It's easily possible when the protagonist is a good politician or rhetorician. Diction concerns with the “verbal expression of the speeches […] lofty and raised above the commonplace” (54). It can be either in “verses or speeches.” Song could be chiefly used for the “embellishment” of the tragedy; and the “least artistic”, according to Aristotle, is the Spectacle, all the sights and sounds of the stage. It’s more in the hands of the stage-mechanist than in the playwright’s. Even the readers, who don’t see the visual and acoustic representations of the theatre, actors, and props, can feel “the power of Tragedy” (54).

Undoubtedly, Aristotle’s minute observations on the forms of tragedy are commensurately found in Greek as well as Medieval tragedies. Concerning human suffering in Greek tragedies, it’s not an individual who is examined but through him the whole human predicament under the incomprehensible and undefeatable powers of the world. That is, Greek tragic actions haven’t focussed on a single intellectual magnificently exposed to crushing external design and his suffering due to personal tragic flaw. Rather, the action is rooted in the whole history of the world and man’s inheritance and relationship with it. Raymond Williams writes:

> What we see then is not a general action specified but an individual action generalized, what we learn is not character but the mutability of the world. Human life as such, always and everywhere, is subject to

> these exigencies. The exemplary case, reminding us, the reliving of this knowledge, brings pity and fear in the general human condition. (88)

Medieval dramas , continue to have the Greek universal appeal, especially in their morality plays like *Everyman* (c.1495). The inevitability of death is one of the fundamental themes in them as well. The representative human protagonists such as in *Monk's Tale* suffer due to the extraordinary, arbitrary, complicated, and dominant wheel of fortune. The individual can act by choice only within this power, not beyond it. Tragedy results from the operation of these powers over common human destiny. The dramas often rely on allegory so that it appeals to all humans. Apparently, the characters in *Everyman* are Death, Kindred, Cousin, Goods, Knowledge, Strength, Beauty, and Everyman himself.

The Elizabethan-Neoclassical Debate

The drama fashion of the Elizabethan Age (1558-1603 and around) have got much criticism and popularity for their attempts to boldly rival and depart from the seemingly-pervasive classical Greek tradition. Most plays of Christopher Marlow, William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, John Fletcher, Tomas Middleton, and other Elizabethan playwrights have broken with the three unities of action, location, and duration; discarded the role of the chorus; and mixed tragic and comic plots for majestic performances. The spaces in their plays are not limited to a city but the mysterious cycles of the heaven, the earth, and the underworld. Similarly, they don't merely stage for the temporal setting of a play a day but the whole history of a man, In particular, Shakespeare's broad range of experience extends from English battle-scene and tavern life of *Henry-IV* to Roman and Egyptian court scenes of *Antony and Cleopatra* to the fantastic island world of *The Tempest.* He has also used a number of

traditional currents: “the Miracle and Morality in the plays from the Medieval drama; something to the Greek ethics or to Senecan stoicism; something to the Chronicle Plays” (Henn 148). The Renaissance tragedies give precise emphasis to the fall of famous men. But since the feudal lords are shown dismantled, these tragedies also connect to common experience. The Renaissance interest mainly lies in tragic methods and effects, especially in the paradox of “sweet violence.” That is, “how can the suffering in tragedy give pleasure?” (R.Williams 24) has become a major concern. As a whole, 1000s of Elizabethan strong-nerved and thoughtful audiences would get wholehearted entertainment and assimilating experiences from such successful plays such as Shakespeare’s *Othello* or Middleton and Rowley’s *The Challenge* (1616).

On the other hand, the major continental 17th and 18th century neoclassicists like Sidney, Castelverto, Dryden, de Vega, Corneille, et al have restored the formal exactitudes of the classical Greek tragedies and expressed a vehement dislike to the Elizabethan dramas. Their plays have opposed the Aristotelian and medieval dignity of tragedy to the Renaissance representation of common experience. In only an aristocratic version of the Greeks, they assume that tragedy must only concern great matters of history. Dryden argues that the exalted rank is necessary to show that no condition is exempt from the turns of fortune. And disciplined style and decorum must follow it. This makes the neoclassicists over-strictly focus in the unities of time, place, character, and as a whole action. One plot should only have a single action that takes place in a day within an individual setting. In decorum, there should be “no residue of waste emotion, no energy of language or gesture inconsequential to the final effect” (Steiner 19). As Steiner quotes, Sidney ridicules the popular Elizabethan drama “where you shall have Asia on the one side and Africa on the other […]” (20). The dignity of tragedy shouldn’t be contaminated by “mingling kings and clowns” or

by the mixing of “hornpipes and funerals.” He detests the Shakesperean characters that grow old between the acts in a play which has just a few hours of performance. One of such bad plays for Sidney is *The Winter’s Tale* where “some 16 years go between the opening discord and the final music” (20). Neoclassicism, in all that, privileges thought over feelings, emphasizing on the thematic elements. Their dramas focus on humour, moral integrity, self-sacrifice, and heroic political subjects. In a good example is *Phaedra* (1677) by Racine. It’s a deeply passionate moral play where the protagonist loves her stepson Hippolytus, but gets destined to have incestuous sex with him, almost against her will. The concept of error (harmartia) in this and other neoclassical tragedies has been shifted from the protagonist to the action to show a general mutability. The error is shown as moral, a weakness in an otherwise good person, who can yet be pitied.

Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche

Hegel (1770-1831) defines a “good tragedy” that illustrates not “mere sufferings” but its causes. Quoting on Hegel, Raymond William writes:

> Tragedy recognizes suffering as “suspended over active characters entirely as the consequence of their own act,” and further recognizes the ‘ethical substance’ of this act, an involvement of the tragic character with it, as opposed to “occasions of wholly external contingency and related circumstances, to which the individual doesn’t contribute, nor for which he is responsible, such causes as illness, loss of property, death, and the like. (32)

This way, Hegel distinguishes between ‘ordinary’ and ‘tragic’ emotions, between ‘mere’ and ‘true’ sympathy. “True sympathy, […] an accordant feeling with the ethical claim […] associated with the sufferer […] is not of course excited by

ragamuffins and vagabond" (33). "No mere suffering or misfortune that doesn't spring in great part from human agency is tragic" (48). Distancing from ancient tragedy in which characters are universal, modern tragedy in Hegel is more personal. In the former, the resolution is easier as the individual may surrender his partial end under a higher command, or, more interestingly, may achieve wholeness and reconciliation within himself. But resolution itself is more difficult in the latter, and so, justice, more abstract and colder. In it, it's not the ethical substance but the personal tragedy that is emphasized. So, modern tragedy is less satisfactory. However, the conflict arises between the ethical forces and resolution comes by a higher force.

Adapting from Hegel, Marx (1818-1883) sees the class conflicts in every epochs of tragedy. In Greek tragedy, the conflict lies between primitive social forms and a new social order; in Renaissance tragedy, the conflict involves the dying feudalism and the new individualism; while in modern tragedy, the Marxist protagonist is a "world historical individual [whose] personal passions centre upon the content of the collision" (R. Williams 35). Improving further, Hebbel sees tragedy as the conflict between the individual, his most general human capacity, and the "Idea" through which social and religious institutions both shape and limit him. Williams argues this as a new form of liberal tragedy where man questions the validity of the moral concepts. Earlier in the Greeks, the conflict was between man and fate; and in the Renaissance, the dualism of man within. It's the first time that in the modern tragedy "not only shall the relation of men to moral concepts be debated, but the validity of those moral concepts" (36).

The Hegelian and post-Hegelian idea of tragedy is inevitably concerned with the achievement of order through disorder, i.e. acting tragic suffering for a resolution with a particular meaning. But Schopenhauer (1788-1860) opens up a new idea of

tragedy which states that the general human fate is “above and beyond particular causes” (R.Williams) rooted in the nature of man. Strangely, the so far viewed historical and ethical considerations are seen as hostile, irrelevant, non-tragic. Schopenhauer argues that human characters have ordinary morality that compels each other the greatest injury. So, what we see in tragedy is: “the unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity, the triumph of the evil, the scornful mastery of chance, the irretrievable fall of the just and innocent” (37). So, it’s an inevitable ‘normality’ of suffering that the power of evil and blind fate rule tragic actions. What’s the meaning of tragedy then? For Schopenhauer, it’s the recognition of this nature of life. And what’s the significance of tragic hero? This is his resignation: the surrender of not merely life but the will to live. “The heroes of tragedy are purified by suffering in the sense that the will to live, which was formerly in them, becomes dead” (38).

Assimilating much with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche (1844-1900) writes:

> Tragedy guides us to the final goal, which is negation […]. It makes us realize that everything that’s generated must be prepared to face its painful dissolution […] for a brief moment, we become, ourselves, the primal Being and we experience its insatiable hunger for existence. Now, we see the struggle, the pain, the destruction of appearances as necessary, because of constant proliferation of forms pushing into life, because of extravagant fecundity of the world will. (R.Williams 39)

Using his own popular term, Nietzsche adds that tragedy is an embodiment of Dionysiac insights and powers. It creates the hero, the highest manifestation of the will, and destroys it as merely a phenomenon. Doing so, the eternal life above it remains unaffected.

Naturalism, Realism, and Beyond

Modernism comes with liberalism in the theatre that has steadily eroded the conceptions of a permanent human nature and of a static social order with connections to a divine order. With this, the most important human values have become associated not with the received order but with development, progress, and change. Revolutions assert the possibility of man altering his condition; tragedy shows its impossibility, and the consequent spiritual effects. Liberalism has transformed into various forms.

First, representing darker sides of human life, Emile Zola (1840-1902) practises Naturalism in the theatre. His plays oppose natural, life-like actions to artificially convoluted plots. Zola's *Terese Raquin* (1873) adapted from the same-named novel, has a man first to kill his beloved's husband then to himself for the mutual guilt he deeply feels. The play has no twists and surprises, but unfortunately grim subject matter that later becomes the logos of naturalistic plays. Naturalism has mechanical description of men as the creatures of their environment, which is recorded in literature as if men and things are of the same nature. Often the tragedy of Naturalism is the tragedy of passive suffering because man can only endure. He can never really change the world already abondoned by God in disorder and chaos. Society is represented as an impersonal process, a machine with certain built-in properties. It is not ultimately within human control.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) then develops Realism in the theatre with complete details of the setting and costuming on the stage as if the audiences aren't observing the theatre but involving in a slice of life itself. The invention and use of electric lights give vivid show to the extraordinary richness of Ibsen's realistic details. Ibsen's realistic tragedies again and again create false relationships, a false society, and a false condition of men. Most strikingly, the individuals in his tragedies formally

supersede the tragic heroes of the classic and Shakespearean plays, and yet retain the power to be no less significant and moving. The individuals get destroyed by a false system of society and become a martyr. In his/her attempt to make the "sick earth" whole, he/she faces a tragic end. "The self then makes its most terrible discovery: that there's not only a world outside it, resisting it, but other selves, capable of similar sufferings and desires" (R. Williams 101). This is the crux of liberal tragedy. So, every move towards relationship ends in guilt. A lasting relationship is not possible.

Ibsen's realistic characters move in a God-abandoned world bereft of any explanation or conciliating myth. The danger for them comes not from "without" but from unbalanced "individual psyche" itself. "Idealism" grows like cancer in their societies. When laden with an ideal, it becomes the characters' mask of but hypocrisy and self-deception, which they wrongly feel is defending them against vices of social and individual life. But with the mask, their psychological and material ruin is a must, because to uncover is only suicidal. Torvald Helmer's "No debts! Never borrow!" (563) philosophy of life shatters him as helpless at last in *A Doll House* (1879) when Nora, who feels her life cored like an apple, leaves his cage. In *Hedda Gabler* (1880), the title-character must kill herself when the mask no longer shields her against the light.

It's conventional that tragedy ends with man bare and unaccommodated. But more inherently, the "private tragedies" of August Strindberg (1849-1912), Eugene O'Neil (1888-1953), Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), and Arthur Miller (b.1915) begin with bare and unaccommodated man frustrated by others and the society in his primary desires. The characters' actions needn't bring the storms of life; they begin with their birth, and their exposure to them is absolute. Death, then, becomes a hope for settlement and peace, a kind of loving and creating a new life. Love and

destruction become the two sides of a coin. We keenly observe this in *Miss Julie* (1888) where Strindberg has connected destructive passions with a struggle of social classes. The relationship between Julie and Jean itself becomes destructive as the isolated beings can't combine. These are the issues of ground-level men and women on whom fortune has smiled go under in their social rise and fall. Even less deterministic than Zola, Strindberg's private naturalistic plays have almost a non-design of artistic plot and resolution, and life has been seen from more than one viewpoints. His characters are influenced by a multiple of factors such as psychology, heredity, and social surrounding. Strindberg suggests many possible motives for Miss Julie's unhappy and destroyed fate:

> The passionate character of her mother; the upbringing misguidedly inflicted on her by her father; her own character; and the suggestive effect of her fiancé upon her weak and degenerate brain. Also more immediately, the festive atmosphere of Midsummer Night; her father's absence; her intoxicating effect of the dance; the powerfully aphrodistic influence of the flowers; and finally, the chance that drove [Julie and Jean] together into a private room - plus, of course, the passion of the sexually inflamed man. (*A Naturalistic Tragedy* 137)

O'Neil also follows the line of Strindberg and writes, "The tragedy of Man is perhaps the only significant thing about him" (R. Williams 166). God has already separated from his creatures leaving evil and guilt in them as life forces. Man only loses in his struggle against the eternal odds of the earth. In an expressionistic technique, O'Neil's plays reflect the nightmarish psychic experiences of the characters in the dream-like and frightening scenery. *The Emperor Jones (1924)* is a good example. His exploration of the Phaedra myth of her incestuous love with her

stepson, set on a rock-hard farm reality of New England in *Desire under the Elms* (1924), is an inchoating example of deviation from Realism. Fate operates in these plays and lust is a force in nature. It drives and destroys.

Also, in the plays of Tennessee Williams, the characters are "isolated beings who desire and eat and fight alone, who struggle feverishly with the primary and related energies of love and death" (R. Williams 119). Powerfully using the expressionism, Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) has non-realistic poetic stage direction. He describes the scene as "memory and […] therefore unrealistic" (Production Notes 908) and the interior setting to be "dim and poetic" (909). The dramatic walls unfold and melt as the narrator-character reveals the lives and fantasies of his sister and his mother who are trapped in their own distorted visions of life.

Similarly, Miller's original version of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) is reminiscence of Willy Loman's mind. The actions onstage should non-stoppedly go from one room to another with lights off in the former and on in the latter. In the play it's Loman's hallucination that he talks with Ben and Biff. His predicament represents the family depressions of every American house due to the capitalistic illusions of America: if you are liked, you will go ahead; petty crimes such as adultery prove the high spirits; being an athlete confers glory and privileges than leading-nowhere study. Loman is "a man who from selling things has passed into selling himself, and has become, in effect, a commodity which like other commodities at a certain point be discarded by the laws of the economy. He brings tragedy itself down on himself not by opposing the lie, but by living it" (R. Williams 104). Like Loman, Miller's characters live in a false society which the individuals alone can't change. Then, "the self that wills and desires destroys the self that lives" (105). The self is cut down to

tragedy and corroding insignificance. All these naturalist playwrights abolish guilt by abolishing God.

Deviating further, Bertolt Brecht (1896-1956) prefers to challenge the reality to reinforcing it. Discarding the realistic well-made plot structure, Brecht experiments with "episodic" plot that Aristotle had said the worst. His epic theatre is Anti-Aristotian. It constantly voids the dramatic illusions by very many reminders like blank stages, songs, or placards to announce scene changes; orchestra on the stage, stark and hoarse lightening, and long discomfiting pauses interspersed throughout the episodic plot. One such a "defamiliarized" play is *Mother Courage* (1941) with an unreal setting on an unusual 30- year historical war in the 17th century. Another play *Galileo* (1939) explores the immoralities under capitalism. Galileo is portrayed as a hedonist that loves wine and delicious food and recants his research for money and life. Brecht's bourgeois moral emphasis believes in redemption rather than in dignified endurance. Brecht identifies the political system as a main cause of suffering and hopes in the fight against it. His plays have "a cynical disillusion about the coexistence of public virtue and public murder, public morality and public poverty" (R. Williams 191). An evil system is protected by a false morality. His famous tragedy *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) most openly turns to whores and criminals as a way of expressing tragic collapse of virtue. Showing people "heartless at will" and "pity and suffering" deceiving, Brecht awares people in avoiding social problems in their ordinary life. The audiences have a different function: "Thinking above the flow of the play" (193) and not thinking from within the flow. He expects them to think critically from above and dispense all cold-hearted muck about the warm-hearted whores and engaging crooks who at least are honest, who have seen through hypocrisy and lived past the earnestness of the old quotations.

Still unlike the playwrights above, Anton Chekhov (1860-1901) brings nor-action plays on stage. His primary emphasis lies not in representing a conflict or argument but in exteriorizing very common crises of characters' internal lives though almost non-action plots. The plots are so life-like, "always based on what is natural […] performances as limpid as life itself" (Brook 735). One feels Chekhov's dramatic techniques are submerged due to excessive use of subtexts, a technique on which the dialogue surfacially reads innocuous and meandering, while at depth implies subtle meanings. The audiences must probe, analyze, and ask what the real implications of the conversations can be. His characters, moreover, aren't heroic or larger-than-life like Oedipus. Chekhov himself writes "[…] the goal of others are far remote - God, life after death, the happiness of mankind, etc," while his are at best "realistic and describe life as it is [and] as it should be" (*Letters* 732). Displaying their human failings, the characters can't slowly master their circumstances and communicate with one another. His major tragedies such as *The Seagull* (1896), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903), are historically rooted and bruised in their genteel poverty in the Godless world. Blending naturalism, realism and symbolism, Chekhov's plays also express political irony.

The Theatre of Existentialism and the Absurd

The "theatre of existentialism" asserts that existence precedes essence and thus situations precede characters. What's universal is not the *nature* but the *situation* in which man finds himself, the limits within which man is free but again totally enclosed on all the sides by it. This concept of tragedy is a complete opposite of the Greek. On this, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) writes:

> As a successor to the theatre of characters, we want to have a theatre of situation; our aim is to explore all the situations that are most common

> to human experience, those which occur at least once in the majority of human lives. The people in our plays will be distinct from one another – not as a miser from a brave man, but rather as actions are divergent or clashing, as right may conflict with right. (Henn 235)

The existential theatre is indebted historically on Kierkegaard's vision of *le neant* or nothingness. He says that man who is ever conscious of this nothingness is subject to fear and anxiety. Kierkegaard's treatment of anguish, sin, and liberty; his view of Christianity; and his rejection of all forms of the finite are present in existentialism. In this, man is either utterly free or utterly a slave.

Sartre's tragedies have neo-stoicism and a curious strain of brutality, a resultant of despair. In *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*), Zeus speaks to Orestes: "Poor people! Your [Orestes'] gift to them will be a sad one, of loneliness and shame. You will tear from their eyes the veils I had laid on them, and they will see their lives as they are, foul and futile, a barren doom" (Henn 238).

In this trend, Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) technically dispenses almost everything that makes a well-made play, using stark lightning in the theatre as Brecht has done, making his characters aware of an audience, and expecting from audience to detachedly analyze rather than entertain the play. In order to reach the furthest of realism, Beckett's "theatre of the absurd" cuts to the bone the realistic devices of plot, character development, and intricate setting. Instead, his bare theatres sometimes have no actors onstage but just some amplified breathing that shows human presence. Others have little or almost "circular" plots; little or almost no words. The problematic situation in his plays like *Endgame* (1957) even transcends any naturalistic explanation. It's some profound, unconceivable situation that afflicts the characters living in a meaningless world, for meaning itself being merely a human

concept. The individuals face the emptiness of the universe where their activities have no meaning beyond. In *Waiting for Godot* (1952), two tramps Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot with their vaudeville routines, but Godot will, perhaps, never come. In *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), the protagonist's existence is defined almost exclusively by an insatiable appetite for bananas, an unquenchable thirst for soda-water, and an obsessive fixation to his tape-recorded diary, all of which are absurd. Martin Esslin comments: "the spectators are brought face-to-face with the irrational side of their existence [where] emotional identification with the characters is replaced by puzzled critical attention" (1095).

In any existential tragedy of Sartre, M. Anouilh, Albert Camus, or Beckett, we find one moral question which determines inevitably into conflict with one or two forces: "the jealous mocking tyrannical god […] or a more abstract rigid deterministic system, against which man must struggle but can hope to obtain no more than a perverted masochistic pleasure in his own futile suffering" (Henn 242). The character is determined neither by heredity nor by environment, but is moduled by the tremendous pressure of events. The plays have a strong fear for humanity.

Theatrical Deconstruction in Postmodernism and After

Since the second half of the 20th century to the present, some playwrights have changed a lot in the realistic and expressionistic forms of dramas by mixing up acting with films and operas, rocks and videos; while others have still retained the structure and character developments of modern and even previous theatres.

After the 1950s, there have emerged different theatres like Environmental Theatre in New York coined by Schechner, Grotowski's concept of Poor Theatre in Poland, the Theatre of Images experimented by Robert Wilson, and many other New Ensembles practised by the marginal groups from cover the blacks, gays, and lesbians

in America, Britain, and worldwide. These theatres all have deconstructed much with the realistic and expressionistic modes of modern theatres. In Environmental Theatre, plays like Julian Beck's *Paradise Now* (1986) have improvised dramatic performances where the actors even come out of the skene to the theatron to interact with the audiences. The Poor Theatre, on the other hand, invalidates all the conventions of rich commercial, theatres such as expensive lightening, elite stage decorations, embraidred costumes, numerous props, and elaborate settings. In reworking of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, the theatre favours sensational spectacle playing out the horrors of history even at the cost of coherent plot and character development. Specially, in Grotowski's *Akropolis* (1962), the wretched and starving people dressed in worn-out clothes at last follow "a headless puppet-corpse, Christ into an after life. They march in an eerie ritual procession offstage into the waiting prison camp ovens" (Jacobus 1151). Thirdly, Robert Wilson has created hypnotic effects in the audiences from his multimedia dramas like *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). It's an eight-hour long opera with repetitive narratives and use of enigmatic and evocative images to represent characters who are cartoon-like caricatures of historical people. All these three theatre texts are designed far more for performances than for reading, and so have drawn many audiences, too.

There are also new ensembles mainly since the 1960s practising the issues of gays, lesbians, and the black communities. After homosexuality was decriminalized in 1667, Charles Ludlam founded the Ridiculous Theatrical Company that produced "plays without the stink of art" (Jacobus 1152) entertaining with the issue of New York homosexual groups. His *Bluebeard* (1970) focuses in creating a third genital and thus a third gender. Ludlam's influence still carries on to many gay and lesbian theatres worldwide now that centre in easing homosexual stereotypes while, at the

same time, celebrating gay and lesbian lifestyles. The typical lesbian theatres like Megan Terry's Ohama Magic Theatre, besides, deal with matters of male violence, social restrictions on women, and women's opportunities. Still further, the numerous black theatrical groups have attempted to evoke original black cultures and traditions for their dignified identity. In particular, Edgar White's *The Nine Night* (1983) focuses on the funeral tradition of Jamaica with the purpose that the deceased ancestors may inter the Garden of Heaven.

On the contrary, other postmodern and contemporary playwrights like Marsha Norman, Wole Soyinka, Sam Shepard, Athol Fugard, Brian Friel, Sujan-Lori Parks, et al have adhered to traditional structures and character developments. In *'night Mother* (1983), Norman deconstructs the hitherto representation of suicide such as by a private decision (Jocaste, Ophelia, Ivanov), secret plan with merely a note left, or a chronic disease compelling one to suicide. But in Norman's play, Jessie squarely and directly faces the issues of suicide with her mother, as if the decision of one's life and death is a completely personal choice.Moreover, her plot and character development indebt much to Chekhovian influences. *'night Mother* is set in the middle of the living room, and Marsha in *Three Sisters* and Jessie have much in common. Norman observes herself as a "purist" in structure and traditional pattern. She links her plays to a ski-lift: "when you get in it, you must feel absolutely secure […] the audience must know what's at stake; they must know when they will be able to go home" (Jacobus 1256).

Wole Soyinka in *The Strong Breed* (1962) explores how the reminiscences of African Culture and tradition give anxiety to characters who live in European cross-culture communities. Sam Shepard, on the other hand, experiments with very coarse language and stark violence on the stage. His Pulitzer Prize winning play *The Buried*

Child (1978) draws on agricultural myth similar to that in *Oedipus Rex.* The land is cursed, the rain has long vanished, and the crops have dried. Similarly, Athol Fugard is in many ways a traditional playwright except in his subject matter. His characters are thoroughly developed, but with great economy. In *Master Harold…and the Boys* (1962) for example, we are given a deep understanding of Halley and Sam whose relationship - past, present, and future - is the centre of the play. The play's issue is apartheid in South Africa. August Wilson, too, following the tradition of Arthur Miller and Lorraine Hansberry, explores the nature and consequence of American dream, especially in the excluded community of the blacks. Their exploitation, frustration, and suffering are presented in *Fences* (1985) in powerful characters such as Troy Maxson. Further submerging to tradition, Brian Friel heavily draws on the realistic techniques of Ibsen, Chekhov, Williams and Miller, and also blends it with expressionism. His *Translations* (1980) has Irish countryside setting and the use of both English and Irish accents onstage. His *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) has the adult-Michael as the main character discovering a child-Michael onstage with his aunts, very much like a typical modern character such as Tom in *Glass Menagerie.* In a more experimental tradition, Sujan-Lori Parks brings loosely- connected narrative events on the state, half-episodic, half-incorporative to the whole plot of the plays that have characters like musicians who perform solo concerts with a theme.

The Poetics of Tragedy: The Latent Uniformity

Apparently, when we survey the whole theories of tragedy from Aristotle to the present day, tragedy seems to have chameleon variability in frequently altering its shapes and meanings from one period to another, one playwright to another. But, these so-called changes aren't changes in the real sense because they can be proved to be only theatrical and historical - in response to the developing science and

technology, and expanding human experiences - not human itself. So, tragedy in fact has its heritage, an underlying unity and continuity beneath diversity and deviations, especially entered to the continuum of its preoccupations, with human suffering - only the causes that suffer humans are multiple. In a timeless commentary, Schopenhauer has written, “In tragedy, the terrible side of life is presented to us; the wail of humanity, the reign of chance and terror, the fall of the just, the triumph of the wicked, thus the aspect of the world which directly strives against our will is brought before our eyes” (109). However, as Draper puts it, “No tragedy is simply a cry of pain. Its an apprehension of pain in relation to a sense - perhaps bleak, perhaps consolatory - of what it is to be human and therefore to belong to a species which must not only endure suffering but also give voice to its awareness of suffering and its destiny” (12). So, every death of human life and human dream in tragedy is the most powerful and moving human answer against the inexplicability and inescapability of sufferings, and so stands above it to perpetualize such bold protests in the death of characters and ideas and in the life of tragedy thereby.

Well, if tragedy always presents the “wail of humanity,” why need the illusive changes be there in the forms to present it? One obvious argument sees theatrical changes as one reason. Let’s take, for example, the open-air amphitheatre of the Greeks and the indoor proscenium arch of the moderns. The former had to cater to some 15 thousand audiences, many of them watching the play from far a distance. Unlike in the latter, the public couldn’t view and hear the minute details such as facial changes reflecting mood. So, the ancient theatres demanded masks to represent faces. Certainly, the tragedies had to be more explicit, “genetic and representative rather than private and idiosyncratic: a tragedy of larger than life, idealized types, and their actions as Hegel perceived, not the expressions of personality” as possible in the

modern close-view theatres “but the embodiment of values and forces which have a universal significance” (Draper 16). While, modern theatres used masks but to represent further realities lying behind faces since the audience could view the small tiny details in the indoor theatres backed up with different shades of lightening.

To be more precise, granted that human sufferings is the soul of every tragedy; Draper suggests two questions that give the backbone of tragedy: what’s the means to present a suffering and what values emerge from the context provided for suffering? They conclude that every successful tragedy written or will-be-written should have historically-rooted form and vision that it can’t do away with. The playwright, to be more specific, focuses upon one or a group of focused individual sufferer(s) over others in a historio-social context and the context is still meaningful one even though the meaning, as in *Waiting for Godot* (1952), may be one of apparent meaninglessness. The contexts and the meaning do have some sort of relevance to “events with some general body of facts,” the historio-social reality, resembling common experience to which the audiences feel attached along with the revelation of their expression of pity and possible apprehension of fear.

In this, Raymond Williams observes that meanings of successful tragedies are both historically and culturally conditioned. And for this, the most common historical setting is the period preceding the substantial breakdown and transformation of an important culture. This condition is:

> […] the real tension between the old and the new; between received beliefs embodied in institutions and responses, and newly and vividly experienced contradictions and possibilities […]. In such situations, the common process of dramatizing and resolving disorder and suffering is

> intensified to the level which can be most readily recognized as tragedies. (54)

This seems true in many great tragedies. *Hamlet* for example dramatizes the tension between the losing medieval faith and the substituting Renaissance science and rationality in Hamlet's mind. *The Cherry Orchard*, similarly, is set in the situation when the feudal systems of Russia were being questioned by new capitalistic upsurges. In a more recent example, *The Fences* enacts the issue of how much the blacks join with and separate from the whites in contemporary America. These prove that no tragedies can escape the historical and cultural or philosophical aspects of the time they are written. They sacrifice their protagonists who defy the overriding beliefs with their immediate experience so that some new and more appropriate distribution of forces succeeds the invaluable death. The audience could see and even live with what happens through the tragic individuals. So, tragedy in fact has particular - not total - meaning "to be understood and valued historically" (61).

The following paragraphs have collected arguments from different critics on how the underlying forms and meanings, the duel backbones of tragedy, have always been the same or rather shifted or expanded despite the seemingly surfacial, historical, and cultural diversions.

The first change seen in the drama after the classical Greek period was the almost entire disappearance of the chorus or choric characters who would comment upon the major characters and events. But, the absence of the chorus has never been the absence of reflection upon the actions and character-roles in the drama. That is, the duty of the chorus is still more pervasive in almost all post-Athens plays that represent the inward motion of characters besides staging inter-personal outside conflicts. First, similar to the chorus, Bertolt Brecht, one of the radical revolutionaries

who dispelled the theatrical illusion of reality in his Anti-Aristotelian or dialectic theatres equipped with v-Effect, has used songs in his political satire *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). The songs comment explicitly on the social implications of the play. Some other playwrights use miner characters like a messenger, clown, or the Doctor at the end of *Everyman*, who give their points of view on the events of the drama. While, the role of the chorus still more pervasively lies in the use of soliloquy in plays like *Othello, A Doll House, The Cherry Orchard,* etc. The major characters like Othello, Nora, and Lopakhin themselves stand off from the actions sometimes, and view the events and their relations as spectators rather than participants. Their revelations are taken no less seriously because characters can themselves be the most discerning judges of their world and planners of their visions. So, in brief, the change doesn't seem in the function of the chorus but just in agents, from detached observations to more convincing action-attached characters themselves.

In another argument, Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* (1580-1), drawing authority from Aristotle, would not tolerate "Asia of the one side and Africa of the other" (Steiner 20) and not a day of but almost a life of the heroes in place and time settings mainly in Shakespearean and other Elizabethan dramas. Steiner himself argues against it in the following ways. For one thing, Aristotle's concept of the three unities was limited to Sophoclean dramas only, for Eumenides has no unity of time for instance. For another, it's Shakespeare's genius that led him towards "open" rather than "closed" forms with marvellous apprehension of life with all "the real and the fantastic, the tragic and the comic, the noble and the vile" (22) in the mystery cycles of the heaven, earth, and hell. That's why, his plays are superior to anything produced in the neoclassic vein. Thirdly, in a different way, Steiner finds GE Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgies* (1768) observing a momentous kinship between

Sophocles and Shakespeare. As Steiner recollects, “What Aristotle meant by unity was inner coherence and poetic logic as it is exhibited in *Othello* or *Macbeth”* (190). Lessing sees merely outward unity achieved by the neoclassicists. Mind you, Aristotle’s main emphasis was also on the unity of actions that form an organic whole.

Showing further affinity to the Greek in *Heroic Tragedy* (1969), Dorothea Krook observes the “charisma of personality” in Shakespeare’s tragedy as a whole that "appears to have an especially prominent place” (189). She quotes the following lines of Hamlet to prove that Shakespeare has best utilized the Aristotelian concept of pity:

> O! What a noble mind is here o’erthrown:
> The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s eye, tongue, sword;
> The expectancy and rose of the fair stage,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers quite, quite down. (279 III i 155-9)

Richard Flecknoe, on the other hand, finds Shakespeare’s plays not as tight wrought “Art” but as “Nature” equated with open mixed forms and freedom of natural fantasy.

Similarly, Schlegel reflects the Shakespearean tragedies like *Macbeth, King Lear, Hamlet* and others to have equivalent stature with the classical Greek tragedies. To begin, he takes *Hamlet* as a philosophic tragedy, one of scepticism. He writes:

> The deliberately slow, complicated, and even at times a retrograde development of the action is symbolic of the intellectual uncertainty which is the essence of the play. It’s mediation without conclusion, and incapable of being concluded, on the meaning of life itself, a mediation

> of which the Gordian knot is at last severed by death. This is perhaps the darkest from of tragedy. (108)

All in all, Shakespeare has appeared to be even more creative and liberative than the Greeks in staging different historic and psychological representations of life in his time.

Away from Shakespeare, from the time of Ibsen, the rank of the protagonist in tragedy has been pulled down to the grassroot level, to "the clown by head and shoulder to play a part in majestic matters" (Steiner 19) that Sidney would detest the most. But Arthur Miller, JL Styan, and George Steiner among many others have welcomed it.

Miller argues that the stature of a corner-grocer, for example, can even outdistance that of the US president if the former's career engages issues of "the survival of the [human] race, the relation of man to God - the questions, in short, whose answers define humanity and the right way to live so that the world is a home, instead of a battleground or a fog in which disembodied spirits pass each other in an endless twilight" (165). His arguments advocate the experiences and sufferings of a common man's life to have far more importance to the public than of a king like Oedipus who has craze for the power or the Renaissance Hamlet who, yet in the age of science, runs after his father's ghost, carrying medieval dark resonances. Miller says that tragedy is still the same to its past counterpart if it takes into account the contemporary historical facts. So, his protagonist Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman,* for example, has still more meaningful rank in the present society than the redundant royal rank of distant past.

Moreover, JL Styan in his article *Tragedy and Tragicomedy* (1962) argues it's no difference when a tragic character suits the theatrical conventions and bears

experiences most common to the audiences. “Theatrical conventions”, as Styan puts it, “dictates that the stature of the hero is relative to the setting in which he’s placed, and if the dramatist is capable of passing a character into our experience, that character may also be capable of assuring tragic proportions” (177). He further adds that “the commonplace world can have its relative nobility, too, and can be equally fearful and pitiful, just as a man can attain heroic proportions in his own circle and in his own eyes” (177).

In Steiner’s words, too, “the agonies of reason require neither palace nor city square; they are acted out in private drawing rooms” (304-5). Actually, GE Lessing, earlier in *Marmontel and Domestic Tragedy* (1667-68) most convincingly writes, “We do wrong the human heart […] when we misread nature, if we believe that it requires titles to rouse and touch us […]. The sacred names of friend, father, lover, husband, son, mother, of mankind in general; these are far more pathetic than […] the genealogy of the unfortunate men [of high rank]” (98). Certainly, the concept of the hero has extended far away from merely a politician of the past as a hero to a sportsman, farmer, singer, doctor, mother, etc in the much expanded modern horizon.

Together with Miller’s Willy Loman, another change noticed by some critics is that the 19th and 20th century protagonists - whether Chekhov’s Ivanov, Brecht’s Galileo, Wilson’s Troy Maxson, or Norman’s Jessie - are not to be pitied, for their nature is not purely heroic but selfish or frightened, dishonest, reprehensible or inconsolable, or causally constructed, unlike sociably responsible protagonists of earlier dramas. So, these dramas are rather decadent. Here, too, the playwrights’ intentions are something else that is truer to life and more genuine to art. Brecht, to begin, has represented Marxist ideal in the theatre: Necessity is blind only where it’s not understood (Steiner 342). His character Galileo knows that being an intellectual

hedonist who indulges in scientific studies as in drinking good wine and eating good food is more rational than being a man of rigid principle and morality. So, instead of martyring himself for his scientific beliefs, he gives them up even if it could be a betrayal to his disciples and to the Age of Enlightenment. Rather, he secretly writes *Discoursie* from jail and sends it outside of Florence for publishing and material gains. Yet, Galileo is much more engaging on his human lust for life and desire to avoid pain. Other critics claim such a portrayal of Galileo by Brecht is truer to reality, truer to Marxism, than dying of being a rigid moralist like Socrates, like Oedipus.

Chekhov's character Ivanov, in the same argument, is an arrant scoundrel who can't tolerate Dr.Lvov's right suggestions to save his wife Sarah's life by taking her to a warmer climate or giving more time at home for her. But Chekhov has presented that an immoral scoundrel, who's struggling a truly complicated life is a better human being than a self-righteous and principle-eating prig like Dr.Lvov. The life-like characters are really more impressive and touching than larger-than-life characters of the past. Such character development in the modern or in contemporary writings either by Wilson, Fugard, or Norman are not changes in tragedy but historio-cultural adaptations to bring dramas much closer to reality.

With Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello, and many other later playwrights, drama has also lost its verse form and highly articulated diction. Is this a change then, or not? JL Styan argues it's not. In *Tragedy and Tragicomedy* (1962), he illustrates that "the words take their substance from the action to which in turn they give rise, and prose dialogue which is functionally fully within the play may be reinforced as well by the action on the stage as verse is" (176-7). He argues that the exquisitely simple expression of King Lear's grief in the following lines chiefly seems

powerfully impressive due to the context that it comes at the end and marks the reversal of the king's former attitude and completes humility:

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
>
> And thou no breathe at all? Though'lt comes no more,
>
> Never, never, never, never, never!
>
> Pray you, undo this button. Thank you sir, […]. (177)

Styan rather ridicules a comic character forcefully speaking in serious forms of verse in earlier dramas. Here as well, it's reformation rather than refusal, so that a more real touch to reality could be given. In fact, Styan's arguments become most convincing when we also observe the superbly articulate prose style of Bernard Shaw in his social, persuasive plays. After all, it's natural prose language that picks up day to day conversation than any artificially constructed verse language.

Further ahead, on the dramas of post-World War II experimental period, critics often term Beckett's dramas as "antidramas" or "dark plays" as he follows the existentialist tradition of Satre and Camus. They say he has almost completely barred from the stage all forms of mobility and natural communication between characters, and produced radically different, powerfully shocking and challenging plays. And, this is true, too. But we can see this experiment as well a mere change in device, not in showing human inability to understand the world, leave beyond to master it. Steiner clarifies it, "The incapacity of speech or gesture to countenance the abyss and horror of the times" (350) showing "meaninglessness" of historically thrown humans in this God-abandoned world is also a way of showing human predicament, in the wretchest degree possible.

All in all, emphasizing the stagnant nature of tragedy, George Steiner says "tragedy has merely altered in style and convention" and not in representing human

struggle and pains at the negligence or incapacity of God in controlling our savages, or at the absence of a perfect system of life. It seems really convincing when he proffers an incident from Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1941). Steiner remembers Helen Weigel's immaculate acting in the role of Courage the mother in East Berlin ensemble. The soldiers suspect that the dead body they have carried is Schweizerkas, the son of Courage. They show and ask Weigel. At first watch, she shakes her head in mute denial. Compelled by the soldiers to see it again, she gives no sign of recognition, but only a dead stare. But then as the corpse is carried off, Weigel looks the other way and tears her mouth wide open. Steiner compares the gesture with the screaming horse in Picasso's *Gruenica.* He writes "the sound that came was raw and terrible beyond any description" (354). But in fact, it was not a sound, nothing, a total silence that "screamed and screamed through the whole theatre so that the audience lowered its head as if before a gust of winds" (354). Steiner finds this silence equivalent to that of ancient character Cassandra when she divines the reek of blood in the house of Arteus that "first marked our sense of life in tragic imagination" (354). Or, it's similar to the deserted and bereft life of Maurya at the end of JM Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904). Steiner claims "the same wild and pure lament over man's inhumanity and waste of man" is always being represented in all tragedies in one way or the other. "The curve of tragedy is, perhaps, unbroken" (354).

Certainly, these arguments are not all but prove that the changes in tragedy are only illusive. They aren't changes in the real sense but only the theatrical and philosophical adaptation based on changing historical scenarios of different periods. So, the changes from the Greek Theatre of Dionysius to modern and contemporary theatres are not changes, but development in props, costumes, and lightening. Or, a change from uncontrollable, unperceivable superhuman forces of nature or *moria* in

Greek tragedies to undefeatable, immeasurable, socio-historic forces like war and capitalism of recent tragedies is not a change in human sufferings but in philosophies to view life only in historical transformations of societies. A real change in tragedy could be to do away with human characters, dialogues, and sufferings which but makes not "tragedy" as understood by the West but some different form of genre. So, change in tragedy is not possible.

Reflecting on this, George Steiner in *The Death of Tragedy* gives three-fold theme on tragedy "that tragedy is, indeed, dead ["blurred or still"]; that it carries on in its essential tradition despite changes in technical form; lastly tragic drama might come back to life" (351). It shows tragedy must always use human characters, dialogues, and plot to represent real or possible limitations in this insurmountable world followed by an irreparable defeat, sacrifice, or suffering and its awareness and acceptance for the sake that our human values, progresses, and prestiges that define us as human in most of the cases so that life could be continued and respected till we live, even if it has some tragic failures. And concurrently, for people who believe that some superhuman mind like God or Nature operates our world from above us as surmised by Gaya Hypothesis, every death in tragedy is also a very powerful questioning or mockery to their absurd looking reign over us.

No tragedians then can or wills to misread the values of tragedy. They only adapt it to suit their historio-cultural settings and technological advances. At this, it's worth remembering the words of C.G. Jung that "the primordial image or archetype" stored in our collective unconscious or "the inborn possibilities of ideas" or "the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type […] constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed" (790). The norms of tragedy could have captured our playwrights' minds in the Jungian way.

It seems no playwrights can completely vacant their mind of the ancient Greek norms of tragedy stored fixed in their collective unconscious. What they can do are only technical and philosophical improvements based on ever-expanding socio-historic perspectives.

It's better now to summarize how some of the critics have structured the forms and values of tragedy. In a historical analysis, Raymond Williams finds four major points in the theory of tragedy:

Order and Accident: - The earlier concept of law and order termed certain events significant against certain merely accidental. The death of a slave or a retainer was no more than incidental, and the then tragedies only focussed on the fate of men of rank as the representative fate of their house or kingdom. But with the rise of the middle class, the tragedy of common citizen could be as real as that of a prince. Nietzsche's brutal rationalization of suffering has advocated this. In bourgeois tragedies, the suffering of a man of no rank has been accepted as more direct and serious. As a result, the whole lived order connecting man to state to world has become abstract and mystified. The general and public character of tragedy got lost this way.

This has greatly enlarged the definition of accident to almost all actual suffering. In this context, order and disorder become parts of varying interpretations of life. They differ in different cultures. This shows that cultural location is very important in the interpretation of tragedy as a form of art. Now the tragic action in a culture begins from the condition of its disorder, and aspires to establish an order. Williams says there can be two kinds of such disorders: the pride of men set against the nature of things and a more general disorder which in aspiration man seeks to overcome. So, the relation between order and disorder is direct in tragedy.

The Destruction of the Hero: - Tragedy is not what happens *to* the hero. It's what happens *through* the hero. That is, the real tragic action or end is not the hero's death but the affirmation that after so much suffering and so important a death a new system of life comes back.

The Irreparable Action and its Connection with Death: - Death in tragedies is not common and natural as it comes to every living individual due to illness, old age, heavy sedation, machinery faults or personal choice. What's rather generalised is the fundamental isolation of the tragic hero facing a blind fate. How he is made to die alone due to grave tragic consequences like the total loss of the human connection or due to profound reason beyond perception. This proves the blindness of human destiny.

The Emphasis of Evil: - The evil in tragedy is not merely like that in the concentration camp where some groups get imprisoned while others liberated. Rather, the tragic evil is transcendental - inescapable and irreparable. Culturally in tragedy, "evil is a name for many kinds of disorders which corrode and destroy actual life […] in many particular and variable forms: vengeance or ambition or pride or coldness or lust or jealousy or disobedience or rebellion […] comprehensible within the valuations of a particular culture or tradition" (59-60). The great tragedies of the world end not with evil absolute as in the general Christian concept but with evil "both experienced and lived through" (60).

Another Critic T.R. Henn imagines the tragic structures as "composed of a series of concentric yielding circles which gradually diminish in size" (38). Outside to inside, the rings are the First Cause, the Determining Past, and the Present Action. Within the third circle, the tragic protagonist has some flexibility to move and an illusion that he can control the present. He, along with the audience, can at least

speculate the nature of the First Cause. But, it's imperceptible and stable. The Determining Past in the middle is stayed and bolted to it. Within the Present Action, Oedipus thinks he can control the present and commits hubris. But out of the past comes the Messenger to rob him of his last hope. It's the Messenger who becomes the remembrancer of the past and the architect of the present. In *A Doll House*, the past that Nora might have left her husband intermittently pushes forward and is horribly projected into, and beyond, the present, even the present of the final scene.

In *Death in Tragedy*, Henn writes that "In most of the tragedies of the world's literature, it is assumed that that death is a natural termination of the tragic fact or experience […] it is rare to find 'misfortune' in the formal pattern of tragedy without its conclusion in death. Of all the experiences, death has the highest emotional potential" (257). He says it was the supreme misfortune assumed by the Greek playwrights. Why so? Henn argues it's the most satisfactory terminal point for the tragic pattern, "the turning of the new page, the affirmation of new values, the revolution of the wheel […] we are quieted by the death so noble: we praise the victims" (257-258). It's also the sense that "only the dead can be forgiven" (259). Henn concludes that the tragic ending in death brings a resolution of the conflict that can be terminated in no other way. Paradoxically, death supremely asserts the unity of projecting the sense of continuity and rebirth.

At last, Henn admits "There neither is nor can be any definition of tragedy that's sufficiently wide to cover its variant forms in the history of literature" (284). Yet he lists 14 major propositions that illustrate the nature of the genre. They are:

i. An organization of one or more limited but organically complete sequences of events in time.

ii. Concerned primarily to depict human conflict, suffering, and apparent defeat.

iii. The basic material is three-fold: a) nature and properties of divine, natural, or human laws; b) possible or perceived division, conflict, or contradiction within such laws; and c) responsibility of the individual or collective man when confronted with such a division.

iv. Concerned with the consequences of thought and action arising out of such conflict.

v. Shows past and present in specific relationship of causation.

vi. Laws and their consequences will appear to both the protagonist and spectators.

vii. Spectator or reader thus oscillates between evaluation of the tragedy qua spectator and qua protagonist.

viii. Employs the methods of poetry: economical to limited time, symbolic communication, themes of suffering and apparent defeat, and an emotive response.

ix. Includes artistic devices such as music, lightening, the scenic effects, the costumes, gestures, pacing, etc. under “methods of poverty.”

x. Concerned to work through ambivalences in which opposites may be perceived as existing simultaneously and in apparent contradiction.

xi. Can produce a total response which is intuitional rather than logical in character.

xii. The total response is of three kinds: reconciled or completed within the organic structure of the play; apparently projected outside and beyond the play; or a compound of these two conditions.

xiii. The release of certain psychological tensions of the spectators as one of the many ways of ‘pleasure proper to tragedy.’

xiv. Tragedy is philosophical, but not a systematic philosophy. After all, the harvest of tragedy is “the freedom and enrichment of the human spirit” (287).

III. The Poetics of Human Suffering in Anton Chekhov's Tragedies

The Spatio-Temporal Setting in Chekhov's Tragedies

Since Chekhov's characters represent people from common walks of life involved in their familial environment, the spatial and temporal locations of his plays are apparently different from those of pre-modern plays. For instance, let's observe the setting of *Everyman:* "Here beginneth a treatise how the High Father of Heaven sendeth Death to summon every creator to come and give account of their lives in this world and in manner of a moral play" (Cawley, 192). Or of *Othello*: "Scene: Venice and Cyprus" (877). And of *Ivanov*, on the other hand,

> The garden of Ivanov's estate. Left the front of the house, with terrace. One window is open. In front of the terrace is a broad semi-circular area, with paths leading into the garden directly in front of the house and to its right. Garden seats, right, also tables, with a lighted lamp on one of them. Evening is drawing in. As the curtain rises, there's the sound of a duet and cello being practised indoors. (3)

We can see that the universal setting of anywhere and anytime on the earth as in *Everyman* or almost no words for setting except the city names as in *Othello* are in no way sufficient in *Ivanov*. Rather are very exquisite details of even the window open, a cello being learnt, and a lamp lit in the shadowing evening. Chekhov has also given enough number of seats and tables in the garden. His setting also reveals what parts of the day the plays are to be performed. *Ivanov* starts in the evening; *Uncle Vanya's* set in the afternoon, and *The Cherry Orchard* begins with the dawn. The scenes are not only the out-house gardens or yards but also inside-house floors as in *Three Sisters*: "The PROZOROVS' house. A drawing room with columns beyond

which a ballroom is being laid for lunch" (171). Irina's birthday celebration is taking place here.

Room, veranda, yard, or garden; Chekhov never takes his protagonists away from their houses, except some off-stage reporting of some of their movements in the city. His plays have round-the-house performances. The people have their own circles of being heroic or being sympathesized in their apparent defeat against pervasive systems and circumstances of life. In particular, the first two acts of *Three Sisters* has "The bedroom shared by OLGA and IRINA" (208), and the play ends in "The old garden belonging to the PROZOROVS' house" (222) with which Irina's fiancé Tuzenbakh is later known to be killed across the river.

Chekhov not only describes what the places look like, what periods in history, and what times of the day his tragedies locate, but also what the characters look like. In act one of *Three Sisters,* for example, Olga who's "wearing the regulation dark-blue dress of a high-school teacher, carries on correcting her pupil's exercise books, standing up or walking about the room. MASHA, in a black dress, sits with her hat on the lap, reading a book. IRINA, in a white dress, stands lost in thought" (171). Similarly, Chekhov suggests Lopakhin "a white waist-coat" and "yellow shoes" (*Letters*, 732). Giving specific details, he adds that Lopakhin's "Hair, not short, and therefore often throws back his head; while in thought he passes his hand through his beard, combing it from the back forward, i.e. from the neck towards the mouth" (732).

So, characteristic of almost many modern playwrights like Ibsen, Strindberg, and to much extent Shaw, Chekhov has also given everything necessary for explicitly creating the spectacle for performance. Are Chekhov's settings changed from the past playwrights then? We can argue that they are rather more accurate improvements. As the societies develop, people's situations have still been multiplying. So, in one

reason, the shifts of setting from universal appeal to socio-historic delimitations have become essential. And, it's also possible in modern theatres where the audience can have a much closer view of any spectacle onstage very vividly. Moreover, many critics have given pragmatic interpretations of the particular settings. J.L. Styan has seen common place world having its own relative nobility to be equally pitiful and fearful, as it can be heroic for the people of the play's time of acting and influence. Steiner has also said that the agonies of reason are best set and acted out in private drawing rooms.

More importantly, Raymond Williams has remarked that the most important setting of a tragedy preferably precedes a substantial breakdown and transformation of an important culture. That is, a successful tragedy, being historically and culturally conditioned, dramatizes the condition between the old and the new. This seems true to Chekhovian tragedies, too. *The Cherry Orchard* dramatizes the conflict of fading aristocratic lifestyle in the late 19th century Russia represented mainly by Madam Ranevsky and her brother Gayev and the nascent capitalistic ways of life vividly input in Lopakhin. In *Ivanov,* the title character discards with his immediate experiences the rigid principles of social norms as dictated by Dr. Lvov. The liberal hero fights the old-order of the society by doing inter-caste marriage with a Jewess lady Sarah. But, as the spouse is continuously ill, he thinks right to look for a healthy wife so that he could continue his lineage. But the overriding old system represented by Dr. Lvov and others crushes him severely to a suicidal shot at last. Yet, Ivanov, as a human practically living with a new vision of life amidst different psychological forces of friends, family, and the relatives, draws a lot many audience's sympathy. His death consequently shocks the priggy people like Dr. Lvov, a sage who knows how to live only in principles, not in practical social life. The old-new struggle in *The Seagull* is

in the field of literature. Treplev seeks for “new forms” in art and speculates the life on the earth up to next two hundred thousand years, the life “as we see in our dream” (72). But his actress-mother Irina, “Stew’d in corruption, honeying and making love/over the nasty sty -” (74), disapproves her son’s attempts and joins hands with a hack writer Trigorin. In the tragedy, Treplev and his new artistic upsurge is shown dying with “agonies of humiliation” from the old artists. There’s similar tragic protest in *Uncle Vanya*, too. Thus, we can sum up that the Chekhovian tragedies also have the infusion of equally serious issues rooted in the contemporary Russian taste on its history, culture, and art. The settings reflect them.

Plot-Construction in Chekhov’s Tragedies

Critics have two main claims to show that Chekhov’s tragic plots are different from the tradition. One, he has opposed untheatrical psychological turbulences to inter-character spectacular events. The other, his plays have completely avoided royal or political conflicts and adopted the minute details of ordinary living. Apparently both of the views are true. But they don’t prove that Chekhov has rejected the conventions of a tragic plot. One can raise some questions for example. Don’t mental actions in characters’ mind build-up a major part of many other tragedies such as *Hamlet, Othello, Death of a Salesman*, and *The Glass Menagerie?* A good plot requires that it’s uplifted from ordinary course of our daily experiences in having deliberately selected and arranged interconnected events that continuously sustain spectators’ interests and complete within few hours of performance. Are any dramatic units of Chekhovian tragedies unrelated, incoherent, or purposeless? Unquestionably not. The following analysis proves that all successful tragedies of Chekhov have got extremely complicated plots with the best possible selection and arrangements of meaningful private events and experiences that fulfil almost all theatrical purposes. Or

that, Chekhov is a balancedly adroit designer of plots who knows very well when and where to switch off and divert, so that no experience is trivial or too much for the audience. Following is then a thorough plot summary and analysis of *Ivanov* as a sample tragedy, and some discerning plot features of other plays.

Like other major tragedies of Chekhov, *Ivanov* also has four-act plot division. Act One has got seven scenes. In Scene-I, we see how the estate manager Borkin's aberrant talks start irritating Ivanov, a government official and scientific farmer. For one thing, he can't stand Borkin's pointing out of a gun at him as if by a robber. Borkin's over-presentation of dying soon infuriates him further. Next, the money-freak asks Ivanov eighty-two roubles in the name of paying to the farm-workers even if he knows that the latter is waiting for his salary to come. Borkin critically makes fun of his scientific farming: "Three thousand acres and not a penny in his pocket!" (4). A parallel situation continues in Scene-II, where the count and Ivanov's maternal uncle Shabelsky comments his music are no touch to Anna and so there's no point in playing together. So much so, Ivanov must admonish his wife's standing at the cold open window ignoring her tuberculosis just to complain the garden noises. He's interrupted by Borkin's reminder that Ivanov has just two days left to pay off the Lebedev's interest. All these naggings are certainly aggravating Ivanov's mood. At this, Borkin negativizes him for having a "bundle of nerves" (5). This money-minded man, then, dreams he'll marry Martha Babakin, a rich widow in their village, and shares the dowry with Ivanov for help. Scene-III follows with similar freakish behaviours with Dr Lvov in addition. The 24-hour negative-minded Shabelsky can stand none. He opinionates that doctors both rob and kill people. Ivanov is helpless to correct his uncle at such blames. Borkin leaves pocketing a rouble from Ivanov. Then, Dr. Lvov reminds his suggestion that Ivanov should take Anna to a warmer climate

Crimea for recuperation. Ivanov honestly responds that his holiday has gone and doesn't have much free time ahead. At this, Lvov accuses Ivanov's killing his wife giving no concern and rest to her at home. But we know from a flashback that Ivanov'd cherish Anna before because she had quit her religion and wealth for his love. He reflects: "Now you [Lvov] tell me she'll die soon and I don't feel love or pity; just a sort of emptiness and exhaustion" (8). This proves Dr Lvov's over statements and priggishness are slowly frustrating Ivanov. This issue momentarily rests when Scene-IV shows Anna somehow rightlining Shabelsky who's been hounding at everybody that comes to his mind. But, it's a humour that such a person wishes to denounce life to a Russian church and die by his wife's grave provided that he gets some expenses. Then spectators can return to Lvov's nagging to Ivanov again in Scene-V: "Someone who loves you is dying just because she does love you. She hasn't long to live, while you - you can be so callous and walk about […]" (11). Ivanov states that Lvov is aloof of such situation and so doesn't know life complexities. With his exit, Lvov's monologue reveals his double-dealing; he accepts how much "home cramps [Ivanov's] style, don't you see? If he spent an evening at home, he'd get so bored he'd blow his brains out. Poor man -" (11-12). In the sixth scene, Ivanov's preparing as in other evenings to the Lebedev's, their near neighbourhood. Both his uncle and wife Anna can't be peaceful. It's monstrous. He asks Nicolas to take him as well. Anna, on the other hand, spoils all her affection in stopping the man: "Nicolas, do stay at home dear […]. We'll laugh, drink homemade wine, and cheer you up in no time. Shall I sing? Or, shall I go and sit in your study in the dark as we used to, and you can tell me all about how depressed you are. Your eyes are so full of suffering. I'll look into them and cry, and we'll both feel better" (13). But along with the sunset, the stalemate at home agonizes Ivanov. He goes at the

Lebedev's to get an even worse environment so that the return would give a bit peaceful night. The scene ends with Lvov's worry at Anna for standing out in such a cold evening. The last scene after it gives some relief to the spectators. Anna's queries reveal how indifferent Lvov himself is towards his mother. That his father has died long ago and Lvov doesn't even have time to miss his mother. Anna accepts the temporarily disturbed psyche of in an otherwise wonderful Ivanov. How nicely she recollects their first love! "Oh, he was so charming; I fell in love at first sight. [Laughs.] I took one look and snap went the mouse-trap!" (15). She warns the doctor to understand the good in her husband. The only question she asks is the loss of her happiness, especially her Jewish religion and affluent family, although she's paid everything for it: "Why charge such a shocking rate of interest?" (14). She apprehends Ivanov's scandals with Lebedev's daughter a great loss for her. Shabelsky has already left home. She also follows Ivanov to the Lebedev's, while Lvov is left tiresome of looking after such a patient who is not serious of cold outdoors.

Divided into 13 dramatic units, Act-Two takes us to the Lebedev's house where his daughter Sasha's 21st birthday anniversary is being celebrated. The first two scenes are almost introductory where the spectators are acquaintanced with their decent guest Martha Babakin, the stingy housewife Zinaida, an old widow Avdotya, and the jolly father Lebedev. There're other guest-lads, playing a boring card game. Sasha gets "happy returns" (20) from Mrs. Babakin in Scene-III. Worried of a good husband to the daughter, Lebedev comments on the dull suitors, "No offence meant, but young men are a pretty spineless, wishy-washy crew nowadays. God help them. Can't dance, can't talk, can't drink properly" (20). Ivanov's arrival at the background makes Zinaida and Babakin pass comment on his mistaken marriage to a Jewess and making an unmerciful relation with her now. Zinaida wickedly reveals Ivanov owes

her nine thousand roubles for three years now. It's too much for Sasha when one guest adds that Ivanov's a rouge. She clears it's rather others like Lvov's and Borkin's misbehaves for which Ivanov is blamed. The only slight flaw of Ivanov is too much trust on people. She proposes that the boys can better amuse girls with singing and dancing and present themselves "likeable" before girls. Shabelsky, the old friend of Lebedev shows in in Scene-IV. He's warmly greeted by Lebedev but the latter's day-long vodka is odorous and intolerable for the former: "Let me go please. You smell like a distillery!" (24). Talking about families, Shabelsky again takes his misanthropic pose: "I've never trusted doctors, lawyers, or women in my life. It's all stuff and nonsense, quackery and jiggery-rockery" (25). More humorously, Borkin offers some fireworks and Bengal lights to Sasha at her birthday. While he's enjoying the guests in the garden outside, only Lebedev and Zinaida are left on the stage. Lebedev asks to serve some food to the guests. For it, Zinaida refers to those many candles lit in the house to show them rich, for which no food service is needed! How stingy she is: "The count hasn't finished his tea. What a waste of sugar" (28). Till now, Ivanov sits aloof, vexed with depression. In the sixth scene, he broods over his frustration with Sasha, "Where I went wrong I can't see. Now, there's my wife's illness, my money troubles, this non-stop backbitings, gossipings, and idle chats - and that ass Borkin. I'm sick and tired of my home […]" (29). Sasha offers her love to make a new man out of him and proposes to go to America, but it's impossible for conscious Ivanov to escape responsibilities: "I'm too lazy to go as far as that door and your want to go to America" (29). In Scene-VII, we see Zinaida horror-struck when Ivanov asks for some days' delay to pay back the interest for being empty-pocketed at the moment. The next scene stages only Kosykh, the card-insect, who crosses the stage with "I had the ace, king, queen, and seven small diamonds, the ace of spades and one - one tiny

heart, but she couldn't declare a little slam, damn her!" (30). Spectators are shocked at his futile business. Scene-IX has the First Guest vomiting his hunger with others: "God, what people! You get so bored and ravenous like a howling, man-eating tiger" (30). They haven't got a drink either. Anna and Lvov have inroad the 10th scene at Lebedev's house. Lvov transforms his dishonesty at the Lebedevs, "Why bring me to this vampire's lair […] honest men shouldn't breathe this air" (31). Anna advises him to learn honesty from Ivanov who never says who he is but it's seen in him. Scene-IX repeats Avdotya and the First Guest. Scene-XII tests Mrs. Babakin with a hypothetical pleasure offered by Borkin. First, she can't get why he asks 23 hundred roubles out of the blue. Then, she falls bewildered when he proposes that she become the countess marrying Shabelsky. She asks Shabelsky to go and stay a few days in hers for the decision. In the last scene, Ivanov and Sasha run in from the garden followed unnoticed by Anna. She is stunned to see and hear the live love proposal and kiss by Sasha to Ivanov, and Ivanov's acceptance that it makes him a strong man to return to work again.

The nine scenes of Act Three take place back at the Ivanov's after two days. The setting's in Ivanov' study, where Lebedev is waiting for him in a vodka-chat with the Count and Borkin. Lebedev and Shabelsky discuss possible war between France and Germany. Borkin replenishes he'd rather deploy mad dogs to disease the enemies in war. The valet Peter serves vodka and salted cucumber to them. Shabelsky's 62 years old now. Lebedev comments it's his appropriate age for him to marry Mrs. Babakin. Borkin interprets it a wedding for dowry and nothing else. Dr Lvov tries to quieten them in Scene-II, for Sarah (Anna) is sick. Shabelsky grabs this encounter to mock him: "Tell me, reverend high priest of science, what sage first discovered that ladies' chest complaints yield to frequent visits from a young doctor? A great

discovery, great! Would you put it under homeopathy or allopathy?" (36). Lvov's out with this. The card-eccentric Kosykh becomes a dead bore to them in Scene-III. "Go away, or I shoot," (37) Shabelsky has to aim a revolver at him to drive him away but Kosykh bumps into Avdotya at the door. She's come to inform the Count that Martha Babakin is passionately waiting his dear visit. Here, we also learn Avdotya's inside out: "I've burned two husbands and I'd marry a third, but no one will take me without a dowry" (38). Anyway, Shabelsky is happy that the old dog (himself) is to its tricks again. In Scene-V, Ivanov can't see to have a complete dishevel of his study room. Plus, all the three - Borkin, Lebedev, and Lvov - have something to pester his mind. After others are gone, Lebedev delivers his daughter's love to him as a "glow-worm" to light his path at any troubles. But, Ivanov's hopes of successful life have already crumbled: "I feel as if I've broken my spine, too, There was school and university, and then farming, village education, other plans -" (41). Debt and family sickness have shattered his dreams. After Lebedev has gone, Ivanov is left alone onstage in Scene-IV where he reflects his past and weeps helplessly:

> I had faith. I looked at the future as a child looks into its mother's eyes. But now, oh God! […] The estate is going to rack and ruin, the woods fall before the axe. [Weeps.] My land seems to look at me like a lost child […] then there's Sarah who offered her future beyond her wildest dreams. She believed me [and has] kance at me or uttered one reproach. What then? I stopped loving her. How? Why? What for? I can't understand. Now, she's unhappy and her days are numbered. And I'm low and cowardly … [pause]. Little Sasha is touched by my misfortunes and tells me, at my age, that she loves me. I'm spellbound;

> it's music to my ears. So I start shouting about being born again and being happy. (42)

Ivanov has suicide-impulses here. Instantly, Lvov comes in to reprimand Ivanov that he's killing Sarah not looking after her. The doctor's adages are too much for him as if by a policeman. After this scene, Sasha's sudden arrival shocks Ivanov further, for his sick wife might say what of him seeing with her. Sasha says her love in not to trouble them but to cauterise his wounds. She's ready to wait for a decade till he's needed to serve Sarah from illness. Sasha exits with a sight of Borkin who is poisonous about her, "[…] her mother is such an old cow, no one'll go near her. It'll come to Sasha when the old girl dies" (48). Ivanov interrogates whether this low-hound is taking the Uncle out for a bad intent. After all, Anna's seen Sasha come to Ivanov. This makes her first doubt Ivanov's relation to the Lebedev in Scene-IX: "You rotten, contemptible creature. You're in debt to Lebedev, and now you try to wriggle out of paying by turning his daughter's hand and deceiving her as you did me? Well, aren't you?" (49). In this disintegrating relation, Ivanov's compelled to disclose that Anna's soon dying as the doctor says. Anna sinks with the news followed by Ivanov's sobs.

Followed by Sarah's death, a year passes before Act Four begins. And Chekhov's balancedly chosen Lebedev's house for the last setting. At the moment, Ivanov-Sasha nuptial is being organized. In an oft-cited climatic dialogue in Scene-I, Lvov most reproachfully tries to denounce Ivanov's character before the public attendants:

> He didn't get Sarah's money, so he hurried her into her grave. Now she's another victim […]. Some people'll do anything for money […] No, I'll shout you up. I'll tear that damned mask off you, so anyone

> sees what kind of customer you are, and then I'll pitch you out of your seventh heaven into a hell so deep, the devil himself won't get you out of it. As an honest man, I'm bound to interfere and open people's eyes. (51)

Sometimes, showing contrasts is a great skill in playwrights. And Chekhov most brilliantly does it. As soon as so shocking blame to Ivanov, Scene-II has so futile a card-slam declaration moment of Kosykh before Lvov's eyes, who never plays cards. Still contrastively, a "dressed to kill" (52) beauty treads onstage in Scene-III before the two, not restraining Borkin from pinching her waist. She's Mrs. Babakin, Shabelsky's fiancée. Certainly, Borkin's negative to both: "(Ivanov'll) handle Zizi's daughter and the Count will deal with Martha Babakin. They'll pocket the takings and live off the fact of the lad" (52). In Scene-IV, Lebedev confides to the couple that Sasha's dowry is going to be 15 thousand roubles after absolving Ivanov's debt. This most troubles Sasha whose love isn't a money transaction. But, poor Lebedev is henpecked and is compelled to follow Zizi's orders. A serious talk holds on now though. Lebedev confides his "spring morning" Sasha to call off her marriage with the frowsty widower. But, despite Ivanov's never-ending complaints and vague remorse, she decides to do him her job for true love. In Scene-V, Shabelsky comes bursting because his engagement with Babakin hasn't been announced as planned. Besides, he most clashingly remembers the death of his duet-partner Sarah as a "marvellous woman" before Sasha and Lebedev. Being unpeaceful, he decides to go to Paris and die at his wife's grave. In another contrast, Shabelsky is so depressed of himself in Scene-VI that he can't tolerate his most precious Mrs. Babakin: "Can't you leave me alone? I hate you" (56). The hitherto hopeful Martha sobs with utter despair for her eroded dreams. Ivanov appears onstage in the seventh scene and asks Lebedev a

private time with Sasha. In private, he frailly shows his greying hair to the young and unspoilt girl and bluntly requests her to call off the wedding. Actually, Ivanov's awareness is genuine for his heroic character as a social reformist: "We love each other but our marriage is not to be done. I can rant and fret to my heart's content, but I've no right to destroy anyone else. I poisoned the last years of my wife's life with my snivelling" (38). He's "done for" being rolled many times down a slippery slope never able to climb back, so, if she loves him, she must break off the marriage. Sasha senses the reversal of situation now: "I wanted active love but our love is sheer martyrdom" (59). But "How can I break off? How can I? You've no mother, sister, or friends. You're ruined, your property has been ransacked, everyone says awful things about you-" (59). Of course, it's so scarce love to make her Chekhov's Sasha. In Scene-IX, Lebedev knows Ivanov's decision will bring havoc to their house "more than flesh and blood can stand" (60). What a philosophy to persuade Ivanov: "What I want to say is –relax! Take the simple view of things like everyone else. Everything in the world is simple. The ceiling's white, boots're black, sugar's sweet; you love Sasha, she loves you" (60). But if the multiplying adverse situations and disturbed psyche encroaching Ivanov from all around could be that simple, why would he express his tragedy in this way in Scene-X: "You see a man exhausted at the age of thirty-five, disillusioned, crushed by his own pathetic efforts, bitterly ashamed of himself, sneering at his own feebleness. How my pride rebels, I'm choking with fury. [Staggering.]" (61). Really, any unsuffered including Lebedev can't make sense of it. Others yet try to take him to the church, while Ivanov must escape to a corner to shoot himself dead! His disciple Sasha may now punish people like Lvov and Borkin so that society would find a new path.

Well, Ivanov story is not that of a royal or political background, but from an ordinary life of general spectators. There're at least an hour's, a day's and a year's gaps respectively after the first, second and thirds acts. Instead of even two-city setting of many previous tragedies like *Othello*, Ivanov is set balancedly in two neighbouring houses of a village. Not only the first, even the second act has exposition of characters and their relations. The ironic discovery and reversal are experienced by both Anna and Ivanov separately. So so. These facts go beyond a single day, a single-locale setting, and many other plot-norms of the Greek, the Renaissance, and the modern tragedies. Are they out of the blue in Chekhov? Not actually, Chekhov's landing down on the ground-floor of common people; experience have rather become far more inclusive and approaches closer to view life and to fulfil the functions of tragedy. Such freedom of contextual choice and open mixed forms are essential to every new playwright as Richard Flecknoe has observed. And what, GE Lessing has said that Aristotle's real sense of unity was rather the inner coherence and poetic logic in the element of a tragic plot, not else. Can Ivanov be observed as having utilized these norms of *Poetics* and its adaptations later?

Why not? For a start, *Ivanov* has a single story with tightly connected incidents that make up a definite beginning, middle, and end. It begins after a five-year period of "slack water" during which Ivanov could give an active love to Anna, his inter-caste spouse and it's not long since his farming has indebted him. The scenario starts with Anna being sick diagnosed of tuberculosis and the hiking expenses making Ivanov difficult to pay off the interest. The events develop in a single garlandlike chain of inevitable causes and effects. The social freaks like Dr Lvov's and Borkin's relations further complicate his situation and psyche. The incidents within Ivanov's periphery have both parallel and contrastive connections.

For example, the first three scenes have parallel situations that vex Ivanov from Borkin's immediate demand of wage-money, Shabelsky's boredom with Anna who comes out to cold, and Lvov's unsituational urge that Ivanov must take Anna to Crimea for her health. Before Ivanov's aggravating mood becomes too much for the spectators and readers, Chekhov momentarily stops this and shows us Anna into the next scene, touchingly correcting Shabelsky's negative attitude to others. But this is as well a wing to the flying feather, i.e. part of the same Ivanov's story as a whole. Then, the spectators can refreshedly return to learn Lvov's frequent nagging to Ivanov, his two-tongue nature in his monologue, the oppressive house environment, Ivanov's leaving home, and the revelation of Lvov's hypocrisy parallelly complicating the plot in the successive scenes. The last scene then includes Anna-Ivanov first love reminiscence by Anna before the act closes, also attached to whole. Similarly, Chekhov can dexterously present contrastive dramatic units within a single whole-giving not the difference but a perfect mastery of organizing a complexity developing the whole. The beginning scenes of the summary section of Act Four above reveal this.

Under such a complex plot, Chekhov has used most dramatic features of a tragic plot: exposition, complications, crisis, committed moves by the protagonists, tragic flaw, tragic discovery, reversal of situation, dramatic irony, soliloquy and the like. Anna and Shabelsky are playing music throughout Scene-I of the First Act till Ivanov and the Baron talk onstage outside. The exposition newly takes place in the first two acts. We know Ivanov's family circle and past life in the initial scenes of Act One. There're many flashback scenes in the play for looking at the past. It's Ivanov's soliloquy in the 3rd scene through which we learn that his wife was "a splendid wonderful woman. She gave up her religion for me - left her mother, father, and

wealthy home" (8). Act Two, on the other hand, introduces us his neighbour, the Lebedevs and their guests. These characters are presented not only with one another's relations but with their natures. That Dr. Lvov' is priggish, Borkin's a money grubber, Shabelsky's a cynic, Zinaida's stingy, Lebedev most loves drink, and so and such are exposed along with their first entrance onto the scenario and to the characters meet and clash in interests and activities. In their contacts, Ivanov is both physically and mentally disturbed time and again. As a responsive person, he tries his best to control the wrecking situation. But, his effort to convince Lvov of his circumstances in Act one Scene-V, to postpone Zinaida's interest payment; his request for Sasha not to come to his house till his wife is sick in Act Three Scene-VII; his call off of marriage with Sasha in Act Four Scene-VII all rather aggravate the situation further. The circumstances are beyond the control of human efforts. Plus some tragic flames of these human characters become a dry wood to a burning bonfire. Ivanov's impulses of loving Sasha and his often-depressive mood also seem culpable. Sasha's deep understandings of his prolonging debt and losing reputation have attracted him at the cost of his sick wife. It was a nightmare to Anna to hear even the rumours of their love in the last scene of Act One. But she faces the same dramatic irony in the last scene of Act Two where Sasha's long kiss to her husband at the Lebedev's is accepted by him before her eyes. What Anna has never expected has solidified now. The deepening love makes Sasha come to Ivanov's house where Anna is sick. Now, she must protest Ivanov's unfaithfulness towards her and infidelity in courting with another girl. Like Iokaste in *Oedipus Rex*, she can't continue her sick and deceived life any longer. As in every tragedy, Ivanov's relations further disintegrate. Then, there's the climatic monologue by Dr Lvov in the day of his second marriage in Act Four Scene-I that publicly denounces Ivanov for killing dowryless Anna of no love

and being ready to marry Sasha so that his debt would be exempted. Ivanov's tragic discovery in Act Four Scene-VII says that it's far right this destroyed man calls off the marriage so that he could save the youthful girl Sasha from being destroyed. Sasha immediately senses the reversal of situation that their love has turned to sheer martyrdom now! Ivanov's soliloquy in the 10th scene plays the role of Greek chorus in reflecting the tragedy of himself as a common human being: "You see a man exhausted at the age of thirty-five, disillusioned, crushed by his own pathetic effort, bitterly ashamed of himself, sneering at his own feebleness. How my pride rebels, I'm choking with furry. [Staggering]. God, I'm on my lost legs -" (61). This is almost no different than the last words of the Choragus in *Oedipus Rex*. Ivanov's suicide at last becomes the boldest protest to the stalemates of the society that wrecked all his hopes to a life of a complete failure. It's very difficult to find where has *Ivanov* broken with the norms of a tragic plot!

Critics like Hingley see not so much charisma in *Ivanov's* plot as Chekhov's other plays have. It simply concentrates on a single-star part and on carefully prepared dramatic crisis. While, they discern his real revolutions in other major plays, especially for having centrifugal plot-stories set in bucolic atmospheres. *The Seagull* caters to the lives of four artists: the playwright, the actresses, and the novelist. There're four heroines balancedly developed in *Three Sisters.* Similarly, the plot of *The Cherry Orchard* concurrently enacts the descending life of Ranevsky against burgeoning career of Lopakhin. The conflicts in these tragedies intensify more subtly in intra-character psychic thoughts than in outward actions. The scenarios look rather gloomy than spectacular as in the tradition of tragedy. So much so, everything on these stages is as complicated, and at the same time, just as simple as in real life, to

paraphrase Chekhov himself. Unlike *Ivanov*, they aren't divided into scenes, either. Here's, however, an attempt to show that his revolutions are not evolutions.

There's no harm in admitting that Chekhov's plays have centrifugal stories full of common-life tastes. Indeed, every great playwright must be new in one way or the other for his identicality. Within it, Chekhov's stories in any plays are centrifugal but strictly mono-contextual and inseparable. Their developments do adhere to the inner coherence and poetic logics. They can be viewed with the same elements of tragic plot such as fights for new systems of life or art, their hubris leading to climax, anagnorisis, peripetia, dramatic ironies, and separations.

The Seagull is more or less designed like *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. Like Hamlet, Mr. Constantine Treplev's fight is against the status-quo art doctrines and empty fames of his mother Mrs. Irina Treplev and her fiancé Boris Trigorin, a novelist. Like Hamlet's *The Mouse Trap*, Treplev also has a mini-play in Act-One that conjectures the lives of two hundred years later on the earth. The setting is completely strange and conjuring in having the World Spirit as the only life left. She sits on a boulder beside a magic lake. Nina Zarechny is Treplev's beloved and actress of the play. The plot complicates since Treplev's own actress-mother Irina's abhorrence and interference cause him to call off the programme. She sneers: "He wanted to show us how to write and act. I've really had about enough of this" (76). She castigates his new upsurge as a display of bad manners and experimental rubbish. Trigorin cynically guesses about the First Cause in the play: "I couldn't make sense of it […] There must be a lot of fish in that lake!" Except Dorn the doctor and Sorin the uncle, none can appreciate Treplev's fervent of new forms in art, the secrets of these hidden fishes. In Act Two, Treplev is robbed. His beloved Nina, the most endearing fish of his life, has been cajoled by Trigorin, the so-called famous writer. Treplev lays

a self-shot seagull before Nina and expresses his disillusionment: “My play failed and you despise my inspiration and think me a dreary nonentity like so many others. [Stamping] It’s as if someone had banged a nail into my brain, damn it - and damn the selfishness that seems to suck my blood like a vampire” (87-88). Treplev is under-recognized even by his beloved Nina; and Trigorin is the vampire sucking his blood, separating Nina from him.

Irina and Trigorin are preparing to go back to city in Act Three. Irina tries to convince Treplev to follow the path of her and Trigorin. She marks a flaw in Treplev’s character in being envious and inimical to the “brilliant” Trigorin. But, it’s Trigorin that has deserted his vigour of life. Here’s how he boldly opposes their stalemate in the climax of the tragedy:

> [Ironically.] Really brilliant people! [Angrily.] I’m more talented than all you lot put together, if it comes to that. [Tears the bandage of his head.] You hacks have a stranglehold on the arts. You don’t recognize or put up with anything except what you do yourselves, everything else you sit on and crush. But I don’t accept you! I don’t accept either you or him. (97)

Actually, Treplev has already injured his head due to depression and turbulent mind as Trigorin has snatched Nina out of him. He can’t write anything. Two years pass between before Act Four opens. This interval is very contextual to dramatize Nina’s unstable career in acting with Trigorin in Moscow. In an off-stage reporting, Treplev is explaining Dorn how Trigorin tried on and abandoned her as a hopeless amateur actress and homeless wanderer. And, she was ashamed to return to Treplev, either.

The much agonized Treplev is often playing a melancholy music off-stage. Irina and Trigorin are coming for a holiday. The sub-stories also reveal two

eccentrics: Medvedenko who cares nothing except his six children and Sorin who ignores the talk and plays cards. Nina meets Treplev in his house, and expresses her anagnorisis. A cleavage appears out of her illusion at the loss of her career: “the great thing isn’t fame or glory, it isn’t what I used to dream of, but simply stamina. You must know how to bear your cross and have faith” (114). Now, she realizes the value of her lover Treplev’s new art forms: “Men, lions, eagles and partridges, horned deer, geese, spiders, and silent fishes, denizens of the deep, starfishes and creatures invisible - that’s all life, all life, all life - has completed its melancholy cycle and died” (114). But, it’s too late. Treplev realizes how pervasively his new art impulses had been suppressed and ill-recognized due to the hypocrisy of so-called popular artists like Irina and Trigorin. The reversal of situation is albeit felt by his gout-ridden uncle Sorin earlier, as though the positive side characters are multiple disguises of a whole tragic protagonist:

> I’d like to give Constantine a plot for a novel. It ought to be called *The Man Who Wanted.* In youth, I wanted to become a writer- I didn’t. I wanted to speak well - I spoke atrociously. [Mocks himself.] And all that sort, er, of thing, er don’t yer know. I’d be doing a summing-up sometimes and find myself jawing on and on till I broke out in a sweat. I wanted to marry- I didn’t. I wanted to live in town all the time- and here I’m ending my days in the country and so on. (105)

Certainly, Treplev has far wretchedly suffered the buffets of a cruel fate than Sorin. He can’t really bear the loss. Off-stage, we hear a revolver shot signalling his tragic suicide. It’s a great shock to Irina and others who are just recognizing Treplev’s sufferings and lost potentialities.

Aristotle's 24-hour time setting is suitably used in *Uncle Vanya*. The story has no death of the hero or villain. More precisely, there are no clear distinctions that Serebryakov is certainly a villain and Voynitsky, a model of the hero. They are both positively and negatively characterized by their circumstances. Yet, it's still a tragic plot. Applying Raymond Williams' vision, *Uncle Vanya*'s tragic qualities lie in the ruthless seeking of Voynitsky, Astrov, Sonya, Hellen, or even Serebryakov to come out of their sordid and workless lives and the resultant defeats and disintegrations. The plot begins with a flash-forward scene by Dr Astrov in his talk to Marina, an old nurse at the retired professor Serebryakov's house in a Russian village near St. Petersburg: "And the life here is so dreary and stupid and sordid. It gets you down, the life does. You're surrounded by the oddest people, because that's what they are - odd. Spend a couple of years among them, and you'll gradually turn into a freak yourself and don't even notice it. That's bound to happen. [Twists his long moustache.]" (119). We learn later that despite being the busiest character, it's a month Astrov himself hasn't worked and shaved his idiotic moustache. Others' contacts with Serebryakov are drearier. Mrs. Voynitsky and her son Vanya Voynitsky have been serving him for 25 years. They'd blindly follow his advice and learn by heart his books that were rather obsolete. Helen, a beautiful lady of 27 now, got attracted to this professorship and married him to have become nothing more than his wife. Actually, Serebrykov is the only stalemate at the house against whom Voynitsky fights and separates, but very late. Had he got a normal life since he was 20, he could be "a Schopenhauer or a Dostoyevsky" (155). But now, when he knows Serebryakov's a foul man, he's already at 55, unable to start a new life. In Act Three, when Serebryakov proposes to sell the estate that belongs to his first wife (the sister of Voynitsky), Voynitsky comes to his tragic discovery:

> We thought of you as a superior being and we knew your articles by heart. But now, my eyes have been opened. Everything's perfectly clear. You write about art but you haven't the faintest idea what art is all about. Your entire works, which once meant so much to me, aren't worth a brass farthing. You've made fools of us all. […] you've ruined my life! I haven't lived, not lived, I tell you. Thanks to you the best years of my life have been thrown down the drain. You are my worst enemy! (155)

In the climactic scene suddenly after it, Voynitsky fires at Serebrykov twice but misses both. The evening setting in Act Four has preparation for Serebryakov and Helen's leave to Kharkov. Their departure takes along the stalemate at Voynitsky's estate their arrival last summer had brought. Serebryakov's rheumatism won't disturb them now. Voynitsky and his niece Sonya get down to the farm work. It's as if everyone is awake as in Shakespeare's *Mid-Summer Night's Dream.* The dreamy illusions of both Voynitsky's attraction to and Astrov's brief courtship with Helen and her beauty have ceased back to reality. Sonya's love to Astrov has also turned bare by now being one-sided only. All the three return to work. Voynitsky's farm will get proper undertaking by Vanya and Sonya, while Astrov's whole-month life of idleness will come back to planting more new tress and nurturing his forest. But tragedy is tragedy in whatever way it ends. Sonya's recognition of human fate at the end of the play foregrounds it:

> We shall work for others - now and in our old age - never knowing any peace. And when our time comes, we shall die without complaining. In the world beyond the grave, we shall say that we wept and suffered, that our lot was harse and bitter, and God will have pity on us. And

> you and I, Uncle dear, shall behold a life which is bright and beautiful and splendid. […] we shall find peace. (167)

They're sacrificing their lives to the inevitable disorder and suffering now with the hope that, if not in life, they'll have peace after death.

At least half a decade goes between Act One and Act Four of *Three Sisters*. Set in a rich country some 12 miles away from the nearest railway station, the play's main struggle is the Prozorov's children's attempt but failure to liberate themselves from the frustrating provincial life to their birthplace and dreamland Moscow. Since their motto is the same and single, the manifestation of four characters Olga, Masha, Irina, and their brother Andrew for it gives a far realistic approach in Chekhov's tragedy than it would otherwise be with a single and overloaded tragic character . The decentralisation nowhere corrodes but confirms the unity of actions more realistically. The tragedy begins with a report of a loss in a flashback narration of Olga the eldest sister: "It's exactly a year ago today since father died - on the fifth of May, your name-day, Irina" (171). A party is being held for Irina and the Prozorovs are expecting their father's army staff to come. From their talk, we know that their father was the army general since his brigade settled in this town 11 years ago. Dr Chebutykin and the baron Tuzenbakh arrive with an announcement that a new guest is coming to the Prozorovs' soon. The sisters feel much elated when their new guest colonel Vershinin appears to be "the lovesick major" in their childhood in Moscow. Moscow is their pride and plan: "Mother's buried in Moscow": "We hope to be their by autumn. It's our home town" (178-79). But the reality inflicts them a big gap.

Olga, 28 now, is teaching at a local high-school for four years. Masha's married at 18 with a school teacher Kulygin. And Andrew's a "lovesick professor", for his aim of teaching at Moscow University looks distant from his present

confinement as the county councillor and lover of a village girl Natasha. The educations these Prozorovs have got from their father such as their knowledge of French, German, and Italian languages have become “a sort of unwanted appendage like having a sixth finger” (182) being of no use in the province. By the time Act Two opens, Natasha’s busy in raising Andrew’s son Bobik. This selfish woman doesn’t entertain carnival people coming to a party in their house, wants Irina’s room for Bobik, and can’t tolerate Anfisha, the 81years old maid who is their service for 30 years now. Andrew feels trapped in such provincial and familial trivialities: “Me-struck here as a councillor, when every night I dream I’m a professor at Moscow University, a distinguished scholar, the pride of all Russia” (192). He’s lost money at cards and gambling and hasn’t paid the rent for eight months. Further, he’s bored with Natasha’s sneering at everyone except her child: “one shouldn’t get married, indeed one shouldn’t. It’s a bore” (204). Olga looks paler, too, with encroaching circumstances: “I’m absolutely worn out. Our head-mistress is ill and I’ve to take her place. My head, my head, my poor head, how it aches. [Sits down.]” (206).

In Act Three, Natasha’s empowering herself as the landlady with the second child Sophiya to nurse. She knows Olga isn’t free for home being the headmistress. Natasha’s first villainy wants old Anfisha out of their home: “How dare you be seated in my presence? Stand up! Be off with you! […] I like to see a house run up properly. There’s no room for misfits in this house” (209). Such priggish and bad demeanours seem completely unendurable in the mannered house of the Prozorovs. Olga is worried to it. Besides, Kirsanovsky Street has caught fire this night. Vershinin’s very sorrowful that his self-cynic wife had left their children horrors-truck outside the burning house. His children often get helpless this way. Olga and Anfisha provide second-hand cloths to the fire-victims. Tuzenbakh is asked to hold music concert for

financial aids. To their own context, Masha's worried that Andrew has mortgaged their house being sunk in debt and Natasha's pocketed the money. She's much bored when her husband Kulygin takes these serious matters too simply. Frustrated with his dullness, she rather wishes she would be the wife to the helpless Vershinin. Irina first worked for the post office and now for the town council but is very unhappy for not getting a proper place to utilize her education: "While time passes by and I feel I'm losing touch with everything fine and genuine in life. It's like sinking down, down into a bottomless pit. I'm desperate" (217). With Olga's suggestions, she plans to marry Tuzenbakh and go to Moscow for a better job.

Vershinin and a half of the brigade is leaving the town to Poland on the day Act Four begins. Chebutykin and the other half will go the following day. More to it, the disintegration and tense uprise in the drama unfolds more when Chebutykin reports that Tuzenbakh had a row with Solyony at the theatre the previous day and they are in a duel this day. Masha foreshadows the Baron's death and asks the duel be stopped. But Tuzenbakh goes to it ordering Irina a coffee he'll never drink. Andrew, on the other hand, is frustrated with people eating, drinking, sleeping, and dying - never able to improve. He wishes they had a freedom from such a stalemate. Olga specifically contemplates on the tragic irony of their fate: "Nothing ever works out as we want. I never wanted to be a headmistress but I'm one. So, it's obvious we'll never get to Moscow" (233). Then, Vershinin's "good-bye" gives a blow to Masha. Since her love's departing, she sobs loudly, for her hope for a successful life is limited to a song only: "A green oak by a curving shore/And on that oak a chain of gold" (234). A distant shot reaches the stage. Soon Tuzenbakh is reputed to have been killed. This wreaks Irina's heart. Loss after loss, suffering after suffering, and cry after cry never cease in this tragic world. However, these tragic individuals go on working so that

their sufferings would bring peace to the posterity if not to them. Here's how Masha voices their tragedy: "Oh, listen to the band. They are leaving us, and one [Tuzenbakh] has gone right away and will never come back, and we shall be left alone to begin our lives again. We must go on living, we must" (236). It's difficult to guess what new hopes will carry their spirits ahead.

Chekhov's last tragedy *The Cherry Orchard* is of a different sort. The usual role of tragic individuals would be their struggles to bring about a new system or vision. But Mrs. Ranevsky and her brother Gayev lose their cherry orchard for sticking too much to their old aristocratic values of life while new capitalistic upsurges have almost made them obsolete. Since the play shows Lopakhin representing the new values and successful career, the play is often viewed as tragicomic. Nevertheless, tragic elements in its plot are far more striking.

The time framework of the play onstage is as long as six months. In May, Lopakhin, a decent businessman and son of their ex-slave, informs Ranevsky and her brother Gayev that their cherry land will be auctioned after three months on August the 22nd when the deadline to pay its mortgage is over. He suggests that they clear the old trees and old building and lease the land for summer cottages which are the hit tourist attractions in Russia for at least 20 years. This way, they could pay off the debts and free their orchard. But these affluently living people don't know even "B" of business. They think very rubbish and vulgar that their loveliest keepsake of their lineage is to be destroyed. "If there's one interesting, in fact quite remarkable, thing in the whole country, it's our cherry orchard (249) -Mrs. Ranevsky; "This orchard is even mentioned in the Encyclopaedia" (249).-Gayev.

Their habits and interests are extraordinary for them, but worthless for the present value and use. It's merely an extravagance that Mrs. Ranevsky ate crocodiles.

And it's pointless for their present crises that their bookcase in their nursery is 100 years old now. Moreover, the self-indebted Ranevsky doesn't hesitate to lend her money to the insolvent relative Pishchik who can't even pay interest to his mortgage. At the end, Gayev wishes their Aunty from Yaroslav would give them necessary amount. But, the fact is that she doesn't like Ranevsky who's married a drunkard.

Act Two begins some days before August-22. Till then, Mrs. Ranevsky can neither accept Lopakhin's agenda nor has any of her own to save the orchard. Lopakhin informs that the auction is inevitable now. At this, Ranevsky first self-discovers her wrongdoings in a flashback monologue: "Oh, my sins! Look at the mad way I've always wasted money, spent it like water, and I married a man who could do nothing but run up debts. My husband died of champagne, he drank, he drank like fish, and then I had the bad luck to fall in love with someone else […]" (262). From her reminiscence, we also learn that she had bought and sold a villa near Menton during the treatment of her lover in Paris. After it, her lover rather robbed her and indulged with another woman. Back in Russia, Ranevsky is now remorseful. Gayev, on the other hand, is almost mad at the fact that their land is being auctioned. He intends to work in a bank and ask loan with its manager. But, Mrs. Ranevsky rebukes him for condescending to a common people's job. Obviously, the times are off for these people who think work is mean juxtaposed to a person like Lopakhin: "When I can't sleep, I sometimes think - the lord gave us these huge forests, these boundless plains, these vast horizons, and we who live among them ought to be real giants" (266). The sun has certainly set down for Gayev and Ranevsky: a "breaking string" rings sadly in the sky. A passer-by begs and Ranevsky offers him a gold coin. The squander-thrift will never learn to control. Here's how her adopted daughter Varya

disapproves it: “Mother, we have no food for the servants in the house and you gave him so big money!” (268).

Act Three opens the day their land is being sold while Ranevsky’s house has a conventional party and a band playing. Ranevsky can merely wish “such an awful thing just couldn’t happen, so I don’t know what to think, I’m at my wit’s end” (275). She can do nothing except foreshadowing a great tragedy on her: “You see, I was born here. My father, too. I love this house, without the cherry orchard, life has no meaning for me; and if it really must be sold then you’d better sell me with it” (275). On the other hand, her lover from Paris has asked forgiveness and is calling her through a telegram everyday. Back from the town, Gayev looks completely resigned. Lopakhin declares that he, the son of their former slave, has bought their house on 90,000 roubles auction price. He credits his giant-like labour for this achievement:

> If my father and grandfather could only rise from their graves and see what happened, see how their Yermolay [himself] - Yermolay who was always being beaten, who could hardly write his name and ran round barefoot in winter - how this same Yermolay bought his estate, the most beautiful place in the world. I’ve bought the estate where my fathers and my grand fathers were the slaves […]. (282)

Poor Ranevsky sinks into a chair weeping. The departures and disintegrating relations in Act Four set in the following October further assert the tragic nature of the plot. Lopakhin is going to Kharkov for some work in the winter. He’s not free even to respond to Varya’s serene love and marry her. Ranevsky has nowhere to go except back to Paris with her youngest daughter Anna. Unable to always be waiting Lopakhin’s response, Varya is also going to the Ragulins’ for winter work. Their student Trofimov is also leaving for Moscow the same day. Lopakhin reports Gayev

has chosen to work for the bank at six thousand roubles a year. Ranevsky sadly farewells the cherry orchard before leaving for the train: “Oh, my dear, sweet, beautiful orchard. My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye. Good-bye!” (293). It’s no longer hers now. An axe is heard chopping the trees at the background. Everyone disintegrates in this tragic play at last except the house’s eldest servant Firs locked mistakenly. He reflects past life with existential thoughts: “Life has slipped by just as if I’ve never lived at all. [Lies down.] I’ll lie down a bit. You [himself] have got no strength left, got nothing left, nothing at all. You are just a – nincompoop. [Lies motionless.]” (294). Any charm at the cherry orchard is deserted now. A breaking string’s sound sadly ends the tragedy signalling the death-knell. Not getting any death obituaries, Firs becomes the main ghost of aristocracy.

Characterization in Chekhov’s Tragedies

Critics have proclaimed two major differences in Chekhov’s characterization of his tragic individuals. One, he’s centrifugal in representing multiple tragic figures in a play rather than focussing on one only. And the other, his protagonists lose public leadership qualities. To put it differently, they don’t have a clear-cut heroism or villainy. Rather, they are modest in being conceived from ordinary public life and confess their psychological traumas more pessimistically.

Before we evaluate the critics’ claims, let’s succinctly mention what very few of the tragedians have observed as the most common norms in a tragic individual for his socio-cultural background. Citing from the *Poetics*, a tragic hero should have an intermediate kind of morality, not being completely virtuous but making some error of judgement driven by his hubris in fighting the old system and values with a new vision of life. In doing so, he’s not merely the victim of absurd circumstances but also the agent of his own undoing. However, he first deserves his heightened reputation for

his knowledge, courage, and practical skills, and is later worthy of both our sympathy and admiration for being like us and undergoing through experiences like ours. In modern times, if we refer to Arthur Miller, the individual sufferer in his socio-political context tries to transform the foggy world fraught with disembodied spirits into a kind of home that defines humanity. Or, as J.L. Styan has pointed, a best tragic character should be best suited to the theatrical conventions of the status quo and undergo through experiences most common to the audiences. While on the part of static characters, most playwrights have infused certain "types" in them to explain or exaggeratedly ridicule their mundane images in societies.

Observing Chekhov's characterizations in context of the historical scenario, we see he has more subtly confirmed than condoned the tragic purposes of characterisations. Staging more than one tragic figures in a play, his characters have come much nearer to life actualities than having only one and larger than life. Their dim heroism or villainy gives substantive equivalence to Aristotle's intermediate kind of personality. And, their struggles from public terrains rather than from city-squares and palaces have most closely engaged spectators' emotional assimilations. On the other hand, Chekhov is very deft at contributing static characters with some social "types" so that he's equally capable of staging common idiosyncrasies of society. The following paragraphs will analyze these two-way characterizations in Chekhov's tragedies with evidential details.

Many critics don't understand why Chekhov has chosen a moral scoundrel like Ivanov as the protagonist of the play. They refer Ivanov's negligence at his wife Anna [Sarah] and untimely love to Zinaida's daughter Sasha for it. They also dislike his too depressive mood. Well, these judgements obviously aren't miscalculated. However, at this background has Chekhov's accuracy of architecting a hero who's not

a fictitious role-model of some utopic world but a moderate kind of personality closely reflective of our day-to-day society where numerous social drives will shape him. Against his progressive moves of marrying inter-caste and developing a scientific farming, in how many ways is he plagued by life complexities? He's irritated by the ill-bred manager Borkin who can think nothing except pocketing money. Doctor Lvov's non-stop naggings about his duty to his sick wife are vexing him. Uncle Shabelsky, dry wood to the fire, is a misanthrope who's never peaceful with the doctor, Anna or Ivanov himself. Stress after stress, the house expenses against Zinaida's frequent reminders of his loan and interest tire him. On the other hand, if anyone offers love, help, and sympathy over such a perplexed character at such encroaching situations, is it unwise that Ivanov has a soft-spot for Sasha while the doctor is daily reporting that his wife's dying of tuberculosis? After all, Ivanov makes a really skin-and-bone modern hero stricken by multiple forces simultaneously.

First, let's view what social and personal goals Ivanov had taken: "There was school and university, and then farming, village education, other plans-" (41). His aim of being a university lecturer has already been shattered. For cultural reformation, he's first married a Jewess Anna. Ivanov's also the first in the village to introduce scientific farming. Let's also see what Lebedev, his true friend and relative since college-live, hopes in Ivanov: "We've both been students, liberals - had the same ideals and interests, both went to Moscow University, the dear old *olma mater* […]" (40). But the fact is that Lebedev is also fed up with life and irritated with people. How does he view life and take Ivanov? "A man's like a samovar, old boy. He doesn't always stand on a cold shelf, there're times when he gets stoked up and starts fairly seething […]. Troubles fortify spirits. I'm not sorry of you, Nicolas, you'll get out of this mess, it'll come all right" (40). He adds, "Your various troubles had got

you down […] It's not like you to knuckle under. It's something else, but just what I've no idea" (40-41). Certainly, true friends make unbiased judgement of their pals. Lebedev shows how responsible and determined Ivanov is towards achieving successes. What factors have been pressing him to sheer defeat, then?

Unfortunately, Ivanov's living in a stalemate society fraught with ill-bred people. How his inevitable contacts with them poison and corrode him gradually! His state manager Borkin, on the one hand, is always looking for pocketing money, ignoring all else. He behaves outrageously. Even in Act One, he drinks and points a gun to terrify Ivanov in the garden. He asks money wherever and whenever he meets. When he doesn't get for the workers' wages from Ivanov instantly, see how he reacts: "You and your scientific farming? Three thousand acres and not a penny in his pocket! Owns a wine-cellar, but no corkscrew! Oh yes, I will […] damn sell the rye" (4). We also know later from Sasha that Borkin had insured Ivanov's cows in the recent past, and syringed them the disease to death just to pocket the insurance, thus badly defaming Ivanov's reputation in the public's eyes.

On the other hand, how priggish and vain Anna's doctor Lvov is in non-stoppedly hounding over Ivanov's head unnecessarily troubling him concerning all his time and treatment to the must-be-dying wife. Lvov himself declares Sarah is dying of tuberculosis and knows, too, that Ivanov's office can't arrange another holiday for him. Yet, he frequently nags like: "As I said this morning, she must go to Crimea straight away" (6). Further, "the main cure for tuberculosis is absolute rest. But your wife never has a moment's peace […] what you are doing is killing her" (8). Let's listen to Anna herself to judge Lvov: "You say Nicolas this and that and the other, what do you know about him? Can you get to know someone in six months? He's a wonderful man, Doctor. And I'm sorry you didn't know him a year or two ago" (15).

Further, “He never said things like ‘I’m honest, this air chokes me, vampires, owl’s nest, crocodiles’ […] That’s how he was but you -” [31]. But Lvov’s such a person who never contemplates whether he’s honestly speaking about others. What he can do is always blame Ivanov and hide his own faults: “People are so cruel that’s what maddens me. She’s a father and mother that she loves and wants to see before her death [while] you drive off to see those Lebedevs everyday […]. Would you really have lost the Lebedev’s girl or her dowry? (43). While Lvov himself has left his widowed mother in no one’s love and care. Such a hypocrite says himself an honest man and castigates Ivanov in Act Four before the latter’s and Sasha’s marriage guests that Ivanov’s killed his wife so that he could marry fresh Sasha and engulf the dowry. This blame is too much for Ivanov.

Not only among Borkin, Lvov, and the misanthrope uncle Shabelsky; Ivanov is crushed by Zinaida and Mrs. Babakin as well. These women make any gossip that tastes their tongues without worrying its implication. First, Zinaida in Act Two composes very bad of him: “The poor man made a ghasty mistake - marrying that wretched Jewess and thinking her parents would cough up a whacking great dowry” (21). Babakin eagerly adds that he rebukes Anna at home for not getting dowry from her parents. Zinaida herself doesn’t ever think how her vixenous demand of asking back her loan is torturing Ivanov at the time his wife is sick and expenses are hiking.

The society Ivanov lives in is so very evil. Ivanov is not understood by them. There’re hardly any people like Sasha who understand how this reformist hero is amidst the ubiquitous hindrances everywhere. The slight tragic flaw in his as Sasha observes is only that he “trust[s] people too much” (22). Only Sasha being from new generation understands what insurmountable struggles Ivanov is fighting alone. So, her unconditional and disinterested love to him is not a fault but the only support to

his life: “I understand you Nicolas. You’re unhappy because you are lonely. You need someone near you that you love and who’ll appreciate you. Only love can make a new man of you” (29). But the natural consequence is that, like every wife, Ivanov’s faithful wife also doubts Ivanov’s character when she sees him with Sasha. She first protests Ivanov’s infidelity in it and dies of both disease and despair.

Much lonelier and far criticized now, it’s realistic that the human Ivanov has depression and suicide. Yet, he’s a very squarely developed and serious character of social responsibilities and reformistic thoughts. Here’s how he experiences life: “Man’s such a simple, uncomplicated mechanism - No, Doctor. We all have too many wheels, screws, and valves to judge each other on first impressions or with one or two pointers. I don’t understand you, you don’t understand me, and we don’t understand ourselves” (44). His questioning of appearances matches a lot to the Father’s doubt on reality in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The complete exhaustion of Ivanov at 35 and his expression of absurd victimization despite all youthful efforts of seeking freedom from the stalemate is really heart-wreaking. Oedipus and Ivanov resemble each other in this. In the last act, Ivanov confesses to his friend and relative Lebedev:

> You wouldn’t understand. I used to be young, eager, sincere, intelligent. I loved, hated, and believed differently from other people, I worked hard enough - I had hope enough - for ten men. I tilted at windmills and banged my head against brick walls. Without measuring my own strengths, taking thought or knowing anything about my life, I heaved a load on my bag which promptly tore the muscles and cracked my spine. I was in a hurry to expend all my youthful energy, drank too much, got over-excited, worked, never did things by halves. But tell me what else could you expect? We’re so few after all, and there’s

> such lot to be done, God knows. And now how cruelly life, the life I challenged, is taking its revenge. (61)

Certainly, Ivanov drank like Oedipus ignoring all risks of life. But the vile forces of society must cruelly suppress humans however vigorous they are - why not Oedipus, why not Ivanov; human efforts can't control the workings of the destiny. It's better to die than live an unliberated and defeated life. He chooses suicide to free himself so that the vicious society and the ill-minded people could get a lesson which would make easier for fresher individual like Sasha to fight on a new level, though a complete panacea is never achievable on the earth.

Thus, Ivanov has both protagonistic and antagonistic characterizations. Chekhov's sympathy lies heavily on Ivanov and on Sasha, while sternly criticizing the negative characters like Borkin, Lvov, Zinaida, and Shabelsky in few.

Albeit with different issues, the characterizations of *The Seagull* and *Uncle Vanya* are also similarly drawn.

In the former, Treplev's a very intelligent protagonist. He challenges the hackneyed styles of theatrical arts and fictional writing with new art forms and new kinds of theatre. Basically, he's bored with the status quo: "But the theatre's in a rut nowadays […] out of mediocre scenes and lines they try to drag a moral, some commonplace that doesn't tax the brain" (70). He adds, "When I'm offered a thousand different variations on the same old theme, I've to escape - run from it, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower because it was so vulgar he felt it was driving him crazy" (70). On the other hand, Treplev's capable of creating an absolutely new story of the earth after two hundred thousand years. There's only one character, The World Spirit. His theatre has "Just a curtain with two wings and an empty space beyond. No scenery. There's an open view of the lake and horizon" (67-68). He offers

"to write without thinking about technique - write from the heart, because it all comes pouring out" (111).

But Treplev finds it too much that his own mother Irina and her illicit lover Trigorin abhor his play. Irina is theatre-actress but highly superstitious, pompous, and stingy. She makes very bad remark of his play: "[…] he couldn't choose an ordinary play; we have to sit through his experimental rubbish. Now I don't mind listening to rubbish for a laugh, but doesn't this stuff claim to be a new art-form, something epoch-making? Well, I don't see any new art-form here, just a display of bad manners" (76). Actually, she can't enjoy anything at all of her son: "He wanted to show us how to write and act. I've really had about enough of this!" (76). While on the other hand, everything is superb for her of her lover Trigorin:

> You're mine, this lovely silky hair's mine, too. You're mine, all of you. You're so brilliant, so clever, you're the best writer of our day - Russia's only hope, so sincere, so natural, with your spontaneity and healthy humour. You can put over the essence of a person or landscape with one stroke of pen. Your characters are so alive; one can't read you without being move. (99)

Irina herself praises her beauty, too. She says she's only thirty-two years old (with her son at 25) and claims she can play "a girl of fifteen" (82). And although she's "seventy thousand roubles in a bank in Odessa" (69), she says, "I haven't any money" (95) to buy a jacket for her son.

Out of many Irina's guests who humiliate Treplev, Trigorin's the main villain. He's intelligent - just for melancholic writing. Treplev says, "[…] after Tolstoy or Zola, you'd hardly care for Trigorin" (71). He misuses his popularity of a famous writer and hooks Nina, Treplev's only hope of love. He's very indignant of Treplev's

writing: "[…] he still can't find his real level. There's something vaguely odd about his stuff, and some of it even seem rather wild. None of his characters is really alive" (110). In brief, the abhorrence by his own mother, nasty comments in press, and humiliation by Trigorin and other Irina's guests gradually make Treplev helpless and depressed. Suffocated beneath these pressing circumstances, Treplev struggles to death.

As Treplev's main struggle is against the superstitious mother and the forceful presence of a father figure Trigorin, so is Voynitsky's. Voynitsky is at forty-seven now and is very conscious. For one thing, he's against his mother's superstitious reading of religious pamphlets and Serebryakov's futile writings. She'll never forget pamphlets and the professor in her life. He finds this a very stupid job that has been wasting his mother's time and his own age so long. He wants his mother stop it now: "For fifty years, we've talked and talked and talked and read pamphlets. And it's about time we stopped" (125).

The other issue is the major issue of the play. Serebryakov's retired now and has come to live in the estate with his beautiful young wife Helen. At his day to day presence and selfish manners, Voynitsky's slowly realizing how his youth has been being spoilt at the service of this futile professor:

> Oh, I've made such a fool of myself. I used to idolize that miserable gout-ridden professor - worked my fingers to the bone for him. Sonya and I have squeezed every drop we could out of this estate and we've haggled over our linseed oil and peas and cream cheese like a couple of miserly peasants. We've gone short ourselves so we could of misery scrape old savings together and send him thousands of roubles. I was very proud of him. He was the very breath of life to me. Everything he

> wrote or uttered seemed to me inspired. But ye gods, what does it look like now? He's retired and you can see exactly what his life is worth. Not a page of his work will survive him. He's totally obscure, a nonentity. A soap bubble! And I've made a fool of myself, I see now, a complete fool. (135)

Voynitsky's anger and frustration reaches to the maximum when Serebryakov ignores him, his mother, and Sonya and proposes to sell the estate so that he could buy a cottage hear St. Petersburg for himself and Helen: "For twenty-five years I've run this estate […] and now I've grown old I'm to be pitched out of it neck and crop!" (154). He feels both his labour and life ruined due to the professor. Had he not worked in the farm for him, "I might have been a Schopenhauer or a Dostoyevsky" (155). His anger falls down like an avalanche and outrageously shoots at the professor, but misfires all. This tragic flaw leads him to suicide-impulses. He even steals a bottle of poison out of Dr Astrov's bag. But when Serebryakov and Helen move out of the estate, Sonya slowly pulls him down to work and suffering again.

Both Nina and Helen in the female part are symbolized by fishes (seagull and mermaid respectively) and both become love attractions for males and thus agents of the two tragedies. Treplev's chosen Nina the character of his play solely for his love. She's the main inspirer of his creativity. When she comes to the stage, Treplev shares this happiness with uncle Sorin: "I can't live without her. The very sound of her footsteps is so beautiful. [Hurries towards NINA ZARECHNY, who now comes in.] Entrancing creature, my vision of delight -" (71). But this seagull gets trapped into Trigorin's charming net of his attraction as a famous celebrity and writer. Trigorin offers, "I don't often run across young attractive girls […] That's why, the girls in my stories don't usually come off. I'd love to be in your shoes for an hour to find out how

you think and what you're like" (88). With the dream of being a celebrity, Nina easily submits to him. This distresses Treplev a lot and he can't write anything now. This makes Trigorin the main villain for Treplev. Later, when Nina's life is ruined, Treplev ruins himself, too, for not being able to save her and his arts.

Different psychological drives push Helen, too, in confessing her boredom with the professor and unfulfilled desire of love and sex. Symbolically, too, she's a mermaid that has beautiful looks but no legs to work. Actually, she along with the gout-ridden old Serebryakov bring in the stalemate to the village. Once Serebryakov is there, the eating, sleeping, waking up, and working routines of the family get dishevelled. And once Helen's there, both Astrov and Voynitsky stop working and start hunting this beauty. Astrov's stopped looking after the patients and planting trees and he visits their house every day: "You know perfectly well why I come and who I come to see […] For a whole month, I do nothing, let every thing slide because I simply have to see you […] I surrender. Come on, eat me" (150). Attracted to Astrov's successful life - as Nina to Trigorin's - Helen "lays her head on Astrov's chest [and let him] hold her by the waist" (150-151). Suddenly, Voynitsky appears in with a bunch of roses to disturb her ecstatic moment. Voynitsky's severe detests at Serebryakov seem to be mainly triggered by his repressed desires to possess the beautiful Helen. He fancies, "To think that ten years ago I used to meet her at my sister's when she was only seventeen and I was twenty seven. Why didn't I fall in love then and ask her to marry me?" (135). And, Helen creates a soft spot in her heart for Voynitsky when she thinks of her boredom with the old professor: "Do you know why you and I are such good friends, Vanya? It must be because we're both such abysmal bores. Yes, bores!" (125). The more she tells him her frustrations and tiredness, the more anger and sense of attack to the old professor Voynitsky collects

in his mind. This way, Helen unknowingly and innocently works as a catalyst in triggering Voynitsky in attacking the professor. She's an agent of the fight and stalemate in their house. When she moves away, both Astrov and Voynitsky return to their works as previous. The detouring of work due to the stalemate agents is the tragedy of the play.

Since *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* reflect Chekhov's post-mature writing, many characters in them are squarely developed and symbolic.

In *Three Sisters*, Olga, Masha, Irina, and their brother Andrew are multiple appearances of a single tragic protagonist in a mono-contextual tragedy. They're all destined by circumstances to struggle and suffer in a Russian village 10 miles far from railway service. After their father (a brigade general) has died, they live for a faint possibility of returning to Moscow they have sweet memories of of their childhood. But the more they wait for and think of this possibility, the more they get entangled in the existential trivialities of the village. Except Irina, others can't even come to a climax of their possibility.

The eldest Olga needs to be responsible for the running of the house. Since Andrew's job won't even pay for the house-rent, she starts teaching in a primary school. Now the double responsibilities of both school and home are tiresome for her. In school, the head-mistress is often sick and she has to carry-out her works, too. And at home, she must maintain a decent relationship with the father's friends and relatives. But beside are Masha's unhappiness with her husband, Irina's escaping age to get married, Andrew's card-games, and Natasha's rude behaviours to Irina and their old nurse Anfisha. Due to such exhaustion and tensions, she feels to have been "put ten years in my life" (210). Further, she holds a generous responsibility of the village as a whole. When the fire-victims of Kirsanovsky street come to their's, she

offers the night shelter and whatever clothes they've spared: "They'd better spend the night here, we can't let them go home. And poor Fedotik's lost every thing; it's all gone up in the smoke" (208). She behaves as if the victims are her family members. All these duties never let her work on her own dream of Moscow. It lies down in the abyss never to be pulled up. As of Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*, Olga's tragedy is not due to her own cause, but due to her school, home, and society.

Masha, Irina, and Andrew are also repressed under the same roof. Masha is bored with her loving but unintellectual husband Kulygin. So, the more frequent she's in contact with the new battery commander Vershinin, the more intimately she opens up her heart: " I got married when I was eighteen , and I was scared of my husband because he was a schoolmaster and I'd only just left school myself. I thought he was terribly clever, and oh so learned and important. But things have changed since then, I'm sorry to say" (193). Vershinin, too, unsatisfied with his Plathean wife, finds Masha a "wonderful, marvellous woman" (194) and loves her dearly. But Vershinin's troop leaves for Poland and Masha must cry her eyes out for her inchoating love being damaged abruptly; she can't elope in the eyes of the public. The circumstances throw her down to the same boring husband again.

More subtly, Irina starts as an educated and aspirant girl of 20 that walks and sleeps with "Moscow, Moscow, Moscow!" (207). She hopes her life to be a great blue sky with huge white birds flying in her. But her innocent ambitions are gradually eaten up by the trapping situations. Due to Natasha's nagging, she reluctantly joins a post-office work. By Act-III, she's 23 and already looks desperate for not having any lover, any plan for Moscow, or any satisfactory job that could utilize her education. She expresses it to Olga, "I've grown thin and ugly and old, and I've nothing to show for it, nothing, no satisfaction of any kind, while time passes by and I feel I'm losing

everything fine and genuine in life" (217). No choices are left for her ahead but accept Olga's advice of marrying with the Barron who's quitting the brigade and going to Moscow for a brick-work. Unknown in love, she jumps into it and reknits her dream of successful life in Moscow. But when she hears the Barron's killed in a duel, everything climactic sinks again into a bottomless pit being supported by tears down her red, red eyes.

Finally, Andrew also experiences similar frustrations: "And isn't life a swindle? […] Me – struck here as a councillor, when every night I dream I'm a professor at Moscow University, a distinguished scholar, the pride of all Russia" (192). From the job, this card-player gets nothing but Natasha, a vixenous and gluttonous woman with no mind except raising children. Against this, Andrew attacks: "One shouldn't get married. Indeed, one shouldn't. It's a bore!" (204). To be sorry as Irina says, "Living with that wretched woman has put years on his life and knocked all the stuffing [academic knowledge] out of him" (216). Andrew is away and away from being a professor as more and more children Natasha adds to him to.

The Cherry Orchard has admittedly different characterization. No question Madam Ranevsky's a tragic character, but Lopakhin, too. Ranevsky is a negative tragic character, while Lopakhin despite his positive drives. Inactivity (or undesirability) and oversensitivity are the causes for Ranevsky's fall, while hyperactivity but insensitiveness are the tragic flaws of Lopakhin.

Yet Ranevsky isn't a totally new invention. Her inadaptable nature's common to Miss Julie to a much extent. In *Miss Julie*, the rule of the landlords and barons is being subverted by that of workers represented by Jean. Time has demanded Julie to agree to come down to the lifestyles of the serfs. Since she can't do it, she loses her life. Similarly, time has asked Ranevsky to drop down from the luxurious lifestyle of

the aristocracy. Since she fails, the survival of the fittest is the must - Lopakhin supersedes her.

Ranevsky begins acting in the play when she's returned insolvent from being knocked down by a French husband. To pay back the mortgage of the cherry land, she must accept Lopakhin's advice of cutting down the cherries and renting the field for summer tourist cottages for the capitalistic business. But she turns deaf to it because she's too sensitive to preserve the land. She confesses it to Trofimov in Act-III: "You see I was born here. My father and my mother lived here, my grandfather, too. I love this house. Without the cherry orchard, life has no meaning for me and if it really most be sold then you'd better sell me with it […]. My little son was drowned here you know" (275). And she's too prodigal to preserve its price, either. She gives a gold-coin to a beggar, eats expensive crocodile meat outside, offers loan for Pishchik from loan itself; while her servants don't have food at home. Her brother Gayev is also indecisive. He can't collect money to save the orchard. All these things force her to say at last: "Oh, my dear, sweet, beautiful orchard. My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye." (293). She's returning to the unreliable French lover as before.

Now, Lopakhin's a tragic hero for being too insensitive. He buys the orchard and a big house but doesn't know how family runs in it. Too busy in business, he's become a son of money, a machine, alien to love and affection. This makes his house left deserted at last, except Firs the "nincompoop" that "lies motionless" (294) or dead as an apparition. Varya knows how to run the house, holds the key to it, and offers love to him; but since he can't recognize her, she's sorry to say, "Life has gone out of this house" (291). In the name of business, Lopakhin is losing his would-be-best wife to be a maid in someone's house again. He doesn't know he'll be alone in the massive but "empty" house after he returns. Back to it, he'll become a ghost to himself.

On the other hand, minor characters are also significant in these plays. Firs, for instance, is very symbolic. He's similar to Bottom in *Hamlet*. Bottom's soliloquy, "Man is but as ass […] the eyes of man hasn't heard […]" (243) is famous in representing absurd language man speaks on the earth. Firs' role is similar. Actually, Firs is a pine-tree that makes sweat sound in the air but meaningless to us. Analogously, Firs often speaks meaningless. His language represents the whole human talks that are actually meaningless. This writing, too, if you take that way. Next, Firs is the oldest and most faithful serf of the Ranevsky's house. At last, he lies locked and motionless. This is also symbolizing the death of aristocracy. Firs becomes another new ghost that haunts the land as many cherry trees have been doing by capturing the dead souls of previous serfs alive.

Anfisha from *The Cherry Orchard* is similar to Natasha in *Three Sisters.* Both are submerged in bodily pleasures as most people in the world are content with. Anfisha cares nothing but whether and what time Yasha or Yepikhodov love and kiss her. Very likely, Natasha has nothing in mind except her children Sophia and Bobik. They represent people's lust in physicalities that are but mere appearances in Nietzsche's concept.

In *Three Sisters*, Chebutykin, Vershinin, and Tuzenbakh are also typically important. Chebutykin is another irony to the absurd world. He always carries a newspaper and annotates some trivial details that are actually meaningless to the conscious world. In doing this, he leaves a deep impact to Beckett's *Murphy* or *Endgame*. Murphy always ties himself on a rocking chair and plays card-games. This's an irony to futile possessions and acts of all humans. Beckett might have conceived such brilliant idea from Chekhov. Next to him, Vershinin is Nietzschean in philosophy. His vision is "Everything comes to an end sometime" (233) because all

are mere phenomenon. But he also means that one should also enjoy them till they last and expect to be surrogated by even better: “a new and better breed will arise” (214). Vershinin himself had love with the Prozorov mother, then with his present wife, then with the daughter Masha, and next he doesn’t know who comes to him in Poland. This is really fantastic. Tuzenbakh’s also Nietzschean but the negative of Vershinin in that he avoids enjoying with appearances as they're ephemeral: “forget your two or three hundred years, because even in a million years life will still be just the same as ever” (197). For him being dead and being alive make no difference: “Look at the dead tree. It’s withered, but it’s always in the breeze with all others. It’s the same with me - I feel I still be a part of life somehow or other even if I die” (230). Actually, he already knows he’s dying in the duel; he ironically gives hope of better life to others because hope and hopelessness are the same for him. But poor Irina doesn’t understand so far when Tuzenbakh tells her, “I’ll take you away tomorrow, we’ll work, we’ll be rich and all my dreams will come true. And you’ll be happy” (229). He knows Irina loves him the most but says, “You don’t love me” (229). Love and no love are the same for him. In understanding the absurd ephemeral world, Tuzenbakh is above all others. He is similar to Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*.

Dialogue in Chekhov’s Tragedies

Albeit said that the conversations among the characters in Chekhov’s tragedies are exact replicas of real-life talks in day-to-day societies, there are ways to prove them much elevated from a mere aping as though by a tape-recorder. Specifically, we can examine his dialogue as equally strictly functioning its two special purposes: a script for theatrical production and performance and a text for conveying to spectators the imaginative experience of the tragedies. For the first goal, Chekhov’s deftly designed the words both inside and outside parentheses for the production of vivid

spectacle: the setting; the arrangement, entrance, and exit of the characters on the stage; their pacing, gestures, and facial expression; and inflections. For the latter, the dialogue most skilfully delivers to the audience information about the character speaking, the characters listening, other characters not present onstage, and a single character being overheard in his or her soliloquy; about public and private relations among characters, and the quality of the circumstances of the characters, and the quality of the world they inhabit; and about the flashback events prior to the play, recent events taken off stage during the play, current events at the time of dialogue itself causing the interaction of characters, and events that are likely to follow in the next scenes or acts to come. Besides, despite the fact that the dialogue sounds "Innocuous and meandering" as Jacobus has said, Chekhov has subtly designed it to be economically consistent and continuously developing the plot from exposition to tension, climax, often anti-climax, and to resolution. An attempt is made in the following paragraphs to gradually illustrate these facts.

The excerpt below that inaugurates *Uncle Vanya* appears to be an exact verisimilitude of how simply an every day life goes. Let's observe and analyze it:

> MARINA, a stout, elderly woman, slow in her movements, sits by the samovar knitting a stocking. ASRTOV walks up and down near her. MARINA. [Pours out a glass of tea.] Do have some tea, doctor.
>
> ASTROV. [Reluctantly accepts the glass.] I don't really feel like it.
>
> MARINA. A little vodka then?
>
> ASTROV. No, it's not everyday I drink vodka, Besides it's so stuffy today. [Pause.] Nanny, how long have we known each other?
>
> MARINA. [Considering.] How long? Lord, let me think. You first came to these parts- when was it? It was when Sonya's mother was

still alive. You used to come and see us in her day. Now, that went before ten winters, so it must have been about eleven years ago. [After a moment's thought.] May be more.

ASTROV. Have I changed much since then?

MARINA. Yes, you have. You were young and good-looking then, but you're beginning to show your age now and your looks aren't what they were earlier. Another thing, you like your drop of vodka.

ASTROV. Yes. In ten years, I've become a different man. And I'll tell you why. It's overwork, Nanny. On my feet from morning to night with never a moment's peace and then lying under the bed-clothes at night afraid of being dragged out to a patient. All the time we've known each other, I haven't had one day off. It's enough to make anyone look old. And then life here is so dreary and stupid and sordid. It gets you down, this life does. You're surrounded by the oddest people, because that's what they are - odd. Spend a couple of years among them, and you gradually turn into a freak yourself and don't even notice it. That's bound to happen. [Twists his long moustache.] Look at this: I've grown a huge moustache. (119)

Yet in depth, the dialogue in many ways contributes a lot to both script and text of the tragedy. For one thing, the lines inside parentheses give many qualities to the spectacle. From "pours out a glass of tea," a stage director can plan for the setting a tea-table, and on it a samovar and some tea glasses. Their talks - "Do have some tea, Doctor: I don't really feel like it."- necessarily clue the familiar and intimate faces of the two who must have seen long before. It also hints that the conversation starts from the middle. "A little vodka, then?" demands Marina to look at Astrov while asking

this, while Astrov's remark "It's so stuffy today" must imply a hot-day scene at this garden. Their interaction with "pause", "considering," and "after a moment's thoughts" reveal to us that they are restful and joining a comfortable time-pass, and placed closely enough for normal intonation of their speech. All right then, any stage director is prettily in comfort at such clues. But, does the dialogue also inform the spectators what story this dramatic world may have?

Sufficiently. Many things about the tragedy can be elicited from this small piece. As Astrov "walks up and down" near Marina, we know he's out of work at the moment the drama onsets. When Marina answers the period they are acquainted for - "It was when Sonya's mother was still alive. You used to come and see us in her day"- we easily conjecture that the house-daughter Sonya should come in the following dramatic units, that her mother's dead now (before eleven years as given below it), and also that Astrov would love this house more when the mother lived because since then he has dropped visiting. This also shows the mother could be more amicable and friendly than other members of the Serebryakov's. Similarly, Astrov's "It's not everyday I drink vodka" and Marina admiring "Another thing, you like your drop of vodka" say us the doctor's self-corrected his habit by now quitting his everyday intake of the drink to sparse enjoyment at present. From Astrov, we also know he's worked too much in last 10 years, even not often having the night rest in treating sick people in emergencies. More importantly, he actually foreshadows the play's content as he reflects life surrounding in this world: "You are surrounded by the oddest people because that's what they all are - odd. Spend a couple of years among them, and you gradually turn into a freak yourself and don't even notice it." This is enough for spectators to predict the course the tragedy is heading to. And the same happens during the play as Astrov himself along with Voynitsky and Sonya turn

off-work in their contact with their retired professor Serebryakov and his youthful wife Helen.

More interestingly, it's not always that spectators understand the issue of the text when Chekhov's characters exchange their dialogues as before. In many other instances, they better conceive the meaning when dialogues fail to communicate. They understand that the individuals are unable to interact because of their typical idiosyncratic manners resulting from their divergent and clashing situation, actions, moods, and behaviours. In deploying such dialogue, Chekhov seems closely attached to the existentialist and anti-realist playwrights such Sartre earlier and Pirandello later. In a few examples, the following is from the opening scene of *Ivanov* where Borkin's platitudinous behaviours of pointing a gun at and feigning sickness with Ivanov are irritating the latter:

> BORKIN. […] I might drop dead any moment. I say, would you care if I did?
>
> IVANOV. I'm reading. Won't it keep?
>
> BORRKIN. But seriously, will you care if I drop dead? Nicolas, do you care if I die?
>
> IVANOV. Leave me alone.
>
> BORKIN. Just tell me if you don't mind, old boy.
>
> IVANOV. What I mind is that smell of vodka. It's disgusting, Michael. (3)

In Act Two of *Uncle Vanya*, the mood-clash is frantically shown between Sonya, sick of getting Astrov's love, and the Doctor who's rather preying on the old professor's young and beautiful wife Helen.

SONYA. […]. Tell me Dr Astrov, suppose I had a friend or a younger sister and you found out that she - well let's say she loved you. What'd be your attitude?

ASTROV. [Shrugging his shoulders.] I don't know. I don't suppose I'd have an attitude. I should make it clear to her I couldn't love her. After all, I do have other things to think about. Any way, I'm to go - it's time I went. (140)

Other two characters' circumstances are always at a clash in *Uncle Vanya.* In Act Three, Serebryakov especially wants Voynitsky among the family to listen his idea of selling the state but as the latter fires back, the former can't himself become a listener. Throughout the play, when one is happy, the other is agitated and vice-versa as shown below:

SERE. Now! Friends, ladies, and gentlemen, lend me your ears as the saying goes. [Laughs.]

VOY. [Agitated.] You don't need me, do you? Do you mind if I go?

SERE. Yes, I need you more than anyone else.

VOY. What exactly do you require of me? [. . .]

SERE. […] I'm old and ill. So it seems to me high time to put my property and affairs in order so far as they affect my family. My own life is over and I'm not thinking of myself, but I do have a young wife and an unmarried daughter [Pause.] - [. . .] I propose selling the estate […] so that we can buy a cottage near St. Petersburg.

VOY. Ah, that was it. You're going to sell the estate. Wonderful. A very bright idea. And what do you suggest my old mother and I should do with ourselves? And what about Sonya here?

SERE. We'll discuss that all in a good time. One can't do everything at once. [. . .]

VOY. […] Here, ask him. The estate was brought from his uncle.

SERE. Oh indeed and why should I ask? Where would that lead us?

VOY. This estate was bought for ninety-five thousand roubles as price went in those days. My father paid only seventy thousand and left 25 thousand on mortgage [. . .] I slaved away for 10 years and paid off the whole mortgage.

SERE. [Vexed.] I'm sorry I ever started this conversation. (152-154)

The unexchanging talk has strikingly been shown in Act Two of *The Cherry Orchard*. Lopakhin suggests that Mrs Ranevsky should cut down the cherries and offer the land for tourist cottages, so that she couldn't exempt the land from loan. But he's unheard because the sophisticated lady can't think of destroying her heritage. She frequently diverts the issue while Lopakhin insists on.

LOPA. You must make up your mind once and for all, time's running out. And any way it's a perfectly simple matter. Are you prepared to lease your land for summer cottages or aren't you? You can answer it in one word – yes or no. Just one single word.

MRS RANEVSKY. Who's smoking disgusting cigars round here? [Sits down.] (260)

Not the least, Chekhov's use of famous adages and similar quote-worthy expressions in dialogue is easily sharable to many other playwrights ranging from

Shakespeare, Ibsen to Shah, and Brecht. Nevertheless, Chekhov not only establishes the quotations but also questions the earnestness of them as done by Brecht later.

Forget that Dr Lvov can treat Anna in *Ivanov*. Instead, the sick woman has good treatments back to the doctor. In an example here, Lvov says himself an honest man and abhors to go to the Levedev's or "vampire's liar" (31) in his own terms. Anna sharply pricks the pomposity of this bachelor: "Never talk to a woman about your good points, let her see those for herself" (31). As Anna's to Lvov in terms of honesty, Sasha's to Ivanov in convincing what true and "active love" is. Sasha's concept of active love in Act Three is cited here: "But love is our whole existence! I love you, and that means I long to cure your unhappiness and go with to the ends of the earth. If you go up in the world, I'll be with you and if you fall by the wayside, I'll fall too. [. . .] The more effort you put into love, the better it is – I mean the more strongly it is felt, do you see?" (47). But both of them are untreated. Lvov never stops to discover himself but always has something bad to ridicule Ivanov. And, Ivanov depressed of pressing circumstances, can't carry on the love to Sasha. He turns her active love into a "sheer martyrdom" (59).

In *Uncle Vanya*, Marina once has a chance to comfort the gout-ridden and weeping old professor Serebryakov. She remembers Sonya's mother's proper cares to the old man and says as soothing: "Old folks are like children, they want a bit of affection" (133). In another excerpt, Sonya's reflection becomes a good quotation. When she finds unloved, especially by Dr Astrov, for not being beautiful, Helen consoles her, "You've a lovely hair" (145). At this Sonya rebuts, "No, when a woman isn't beautiful, people always say, 'you have lovely eyes, you have lovely hair" (145).

Chekhov not only collects old quotations. He's more eloquent when he creates his own through the mouths of his favourite characters. In Act One of *Three Sisters*,

the young Irina has more energetic thoughts. On her birthday, she philosophizes the value of work with doctor Chebutykin, “Man should work and toil by the sweat of his brow, whoever he is - that’s the whole purpose and meaning of his life, his happiness and his joy” (173). Irina’s vision is not solely new though. It’s laden with Schopenhauer’s vision of a tragic hero. To be clearer, it’s the protagonist’s surrender of not merely life but the will to live, so that they are purgated by the suffering and reach above the “the ordinary morality” into an altruistic living and death.

In *The Cherry Orchard*, Gayev’s remark is very interesting. He’s ambivalent about how to collect money to pay the debt on their land. Asking to their rich aunt in Yaroslav is an option. Marrying Anna to a wealthy man may be another. Or he even thinks of someone rich that comes to their house and generously offers loan. And there’s likely a chance that he gets a new job in a bank to ask the boss the amount he needs in order to save his land. Among such weak alternatives, Gayev asserts, “when a lot of different remedies are suggested for a disease, which means it can’t be cured” (255).

The proverbs Pishchick speaks are also worth talking here. In Act Three, a conventional party is inroad in Mrs Lyuba Ranevsky’s house. Pishchik’s got a high blood pressure and has twice had a stroke, too. Yet, since he’s got to please Mrs. Ranevsky for some debt, he participates in the dance saying, “[…] those who run with the pack must wag their tails, even if they can’t raise a bark” (271). Talking to Trofimov, he also says “A hungry dog thinks only of his supper” (271). Certainly his land is in mortgage as well. So, he can’t think anything but how to collect two hundred and forty roubles to pay the interest.

Chekhov’s equally diligent in manipulating proverbs. In the opening scene of *The Seagull*, Masha from a well-off family doesn’t know how difficult life and

happiness is for less-earners or the unemployed. She tells Medvedenko, “Money doesn’t matter, even a poor man can be happy” (67). Now, like Brecht and Shah, Chekhov wants to somersault the quotation. With a small income of twenty-three roubles a month, Medvedenko makes clear how important money-management is to have happiness in his family, “Yes - in theory. But look how it works out. There’s me, my mother, my two sisters, and my young brother. But I only earn twenty-three roubles and we need food and drink, don’t we? Tea and sugar? And tobacco? We can hardly make ends meet” (67). Or, when money is insufficient, Chekhov materialistically shows that even affluent people like the estate owner Sorin lose their happiness. In Act Three, Sorin explains to Irina why he’s unable to help Treplev in his new-art rush, either: “If I had some I’d give it him myself, stands to reason. But I haven’t, I’m broke. [Laughs.] My manager takes my entire pension and spends it on raising crops, cattle and bees, and my money’s all wasted. The bees die, the cows die, and they won’t let me use the horses” (95). One fears whether it’s another territory of Oedipus’ kingdom.

Shortly after, when Sorin’s sick, he goes for a sleep “leaning on a stick” (95). Medvedenko alludes to Sphinx’s riddle to Oedipus: “Do you know this riddle, [Uncle]? ‘What walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon and on three legs in the evening?’” (95). Chekhov’s made it no more a riddle though. See how Sorin adapts it: “Yes, I know. And sleeps the night on its back. I can manage by myself, thanks very much” (95).

Olga in *Three Sisters* seriously questions the faith in God that his rule is just over the mortal beings. She's desperately waiting for her marriage and a good home, while she always has to look after others' children at a school. She doubts the saying, "God's in his heaven, all's right will the world" because she thinks if she "got married,

and stayed at home all day it might be even better" (173). She would love her own husband and children. But God doesn't care her happiness. Masha, in a different context in Act Two quotes Gogol's saying: "Life on this earth is no end of a bore, my friends" (198). The listener Tuzenbakh (or the mouth-speaker of Chekhov's philosophy) moulds it differently: "What I say is 'Arguing with you is no end of a job, my friends'" (198). This transformation is very significant because it represents Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy - that arguing with one another in life-matters is one of many insatiable hungers for existence. It's a good manifestation of the will to be destroyed later as a mere phenomenon.

Postulation of Themes in Chekhov's Tragedies

Anton Chekhov has said his tragedies show how bad and dreary lives people are living so that the spectators work for a better life for themselves and for posterity. Under this condition, he's raised different issues of his contemporary history and culture, especially from village areas. Along with, his tragedies describe some stalemate conditions where the protagonists fall trapped in spite of their incessant protests and struggles. And, Chekhov's tragedies also raise many philosophical issues of Nietzche, Schopenhauer, etc. though not systematically.

During Chekhov's time, Russia couldn't entertain inter-caste and extra-marital love affairs. So, advocating them has become the main theme of *Ivanov.* Ivanov, the central character for this, dearly loves and marries Anna Sarah, a Jewess girl. He launches a scientific farming first in the Russian village to lead a successful life. But as in every tragedy, his new attempts are lost in the mist of odd old values. Borkin's mismanagement and corruption spoil his farm. Here's his invective to Ivanov: "You and your scientific farming! Three thousand acres and not a penny in his pocket! Owns a wine-cellar, but no corkscrew! I've a good mind to sell your carriage and

horses tomorrow. Oh yes I will - [. . .] The men come for their wages" (4). Anna catches tuberculosis beyond treatment. Even Zinaida and Babakin flout at Ivanov's action of marrying the Jewess in the greed of dowry he could not get. They don't respect the woman and her pure love in Ivanov. Next, Zinaida's daughter Sasha is keenly observing the obstacles Ivanov's fighting with. That makes her love him: "I'm crazy about you - life has no meaning, no happiness, no joy without you. You're everything to me" (33). But tragedies only promise and never fulfil anything. To promise the advocacy, Ivanov dies boldly. This stuns Dr Lvov, Borkin, Zinaida, and others who may now appreciate and excuse the man and the humanity within next-born Ivanovs in real life. And, Sasha is left to struggle for the unfulfilled promises Ivanov has had.

What sorts of fictional and theatrical arts should be written for new generation is the issue of *The Seagull*. The major theme in the play is Treplev's fight against old defunct arts, artists, and their exploitation of innocent people with urban delusions. Treplev abhors the clichéd styles of writing: "Out of mediocre scenes and lines they try to drag a moral, some common place that doesn't tax the brain" (70). While he values experiment: "what we need is a new kind of theatre. New forms are what we need" (70). But the status quo is so evading that his own mother detest anything new, "he couldn't choose an ordinary play, we have to sit for his experimental rubbish […] a display of bad manners" (76). Except Dr Dorn and Uncle Sorin, Treplev is criticized by every one. Trigorin's the main opponent. This melancholic writer deceitfully charms upon Treplev's lover Nina with vacuous hopes of a successful actress in the town. The debutante Nina innocently sprouts a blissful career as "a real celebrity with all the tumult and the shouting that to with it" (91). Once Trigorin exploits her youth and beauty taking in the city, he quits her helpless in that indifferent town. Her failure

distresses her true lover and worshiper Treplev so much. When this hero's frustration with chastised art and defamed personality adds up, he suicides in a shock to his mother Irina and everyone else of the status quo in art. They must revaluate their traditional writing and bad intentions.

Indictment against laziness, worker's ownership on land, and realization of a true beauty are some remarkable promises in *Uncle Vanya*. Once the gout-ridden and pompously popular old professor Serebryakov comes to his estate with his beautiful young wife Helen, everything in the house is disturbed. Voynitsky reports it, "Before they came I never had a minute to myself. Sonya and I were pretty busy, I can tell you that. But now only Sonya works and I just sleep, eat, and drink. It's all wrong!" (120). And Marina accedes," Disgraceful, I call it! The professor doesn't get up till midday, but the samovar's kept on the boil all the morning waiting his pleasure" (121). Voynitsky, on the one hand, realizes he's been fruitlessly sending the lazy professor and hack writer all income of the estate for 25 years. Moreover, Voynitsky is yet a bachelor (at 47) who can't understand why the young Helen wasn't his wife but of the old professor. He ratiocinates, "I'd hold her in my arms and whisper, 'Don't be afraid. I'm here!' […] But oh God, my head's in such a whirl. Why am I so old? Why can't she understand me?" (135). These thoughts cramp Voynitsky from any physical works in the farm. He keeps on questioning upon his wasted youth. What's more, even Dr Astrov has neglected his service to patients and reforestation works in the name of Helen's beauty. But he can't realize how far beautiful Sonya is in incessantly carrying out house works. He doesn't know beauty means not appearance but diligence. Sonya's desperate following - "Every moment I seem to hear his voice or feel his hand in mine" (145) - are going in the dustbin as Astrov's craze but lies to the mermaid's blood Helen who's nothing except a luring face and a sweet talk. At this situation,

Serebryakov takes the land for granted just because it's his dead wife's. He proposes to sell it so that he could buy a villa in St. Petersburg for the couple. Voynitsky, who's been managing the farm for 25 years, never lets it go. He repudiates the professor's plan, "The estate would never have been bought at all if I hadn't given up my own share of the inheritance to my sister whom I loved dearly. What's more, I slaved away for 10 years and paid off the whole mortgage […] And now I've grown old and I'm to be pitched out of it neck and crop!" (154). Voynitsky fires at Serebryakov in being made a fool till now. Serebryakov and Helen must move away to Kharkov. But yet, whose land Voynitsky's wasting his life on and how long isn't decided. And similarly no one knows how long it takes to Astrov to recognize how dearly Sonya loves him.

We can find provincial frustration in *Three Sisters.* After their father's posting to a village 10 miles far from railway station, the Prozorov children are conditioned to struggle there, while they always miss their childhood Moscow and their related future dreams. In spite of their wish to return to Moscow as soon as possible, they gradually realize their personal insignificance before overwhelming impersonal forces of their circumstances. They lose their own future in spite of their non-stop duties for work and humanity. They bag nothing but destroyed hopes and frustration. The play begins a year after their father, the army brigade commander, has died. First, Olga confesses her frustration as the dream for Moscow is deterring with mundane village life: "And it's true that these four years I've been at the high-school I've felt my youth and energy draining away drop by drop each day. Only one thing grows stronger and stronger: a certain longing - [to go to Moscow.]" (172). If only someone from Moscow would come and marry her. But as days go by, she has to work more as a head-mistress at the school. Escaping from the situation becomes impossible. Likewise, her junior Masha's married a teacher who's but unintelligent and boring. He

knows to care nothing except children .She hopes Vershinin, the new battery-commander, would take her to the capital but he has to leave for Poland forgetting Masha and her love to him. The youngest Irina has a great vision of life when she's at 20. She talks to Chebutykin, "You know how you sometimes long for a drink on a hot day - well, that's how I long to work" (174). But despite her good education of German, French, Italian, and English languages, she happens to join a simple work at a local post office. She's frustrated for losing the Moscow opportunities such as being an emissary. Lastly, she hopes to marry Tuzenbakh and go to Moscow together. But the tragedy is that the Baron is killed in a duel and Irina's left again with all hopes shattered. Andrew, their brother, also dreams but can never become a pristine professor at Moscow University. The encroaching circumstances in the village have made him a local councillor and husband of a rude and squandering wife, Natasha. They're always disrupting his "vision of freedom" (230).

The Cherry Orchard captures the capitalistic movement of Russian economic transformation. It dramatizes the disruption of sustainable love and family in modern Russia due to inadaptable tragic characters who can't redeem the past and also due to insensitive business people who are not free for love and family. Mrs. Ranevsky and her brother Gayev are from razing aristocratic family. Ranevsky has taken a debt by mortgaging their cherry orchard to visit her new lover in Paris. Now, the lover's cheated her and she returns bankrupt. Lopakhin is a successful businessman of the village. Being the son of a former slave to the cherry orchard, he suggests that Ranevsky had better pull down the old house, cut down the trees, and rent the land so that she can pay back the debt. But Ranevsky and Gayev respect their house and the orchard as church and holy garden. Ranevsky says, "If there's one interesting, in fact quite remarkable, thing in the whole country, it's our cherry orchard" (245). The

nursery kitchen, the book-case, etc, bear them some pristine significance attached to their childhood. What's more, Ranevsky is a real spend-thrift. She eats odd expensive foods like "crocodile" (245) and doesn't hesitate to give a gold coin to a beggar or loan from her loan to their neighbour Pishchik. The land auction day August-22 is coming. Gayev is restless as he can't manage to collect enough money. He wants to join a job for office loan. But Ranevsky retracts him saying that people from aristocratic class shouldn't work outside as a labourer. Gayev dreams but can't get enough money from her rich auntie or from anyone else. And Ranevsky takes no action - actually she can't - to prevent the land. At the auction, Lopakhin himself buys the land in 90 thousand roubles action price He seems to have fulfilled an ambitious success in business: "I've bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves; they weren't even allowed inside kitchen" (282). This is a fainting news break for Ranevsky. In spite of heart-wreck, she must quit it now, “Oh my dear, sweet, beautiful - orchard. My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye. Good bye!" (293). She loses the land she was born in not being able to redeem the past. Lopakhin, too, is not that successful. Too much busy in business, he ignores Varya's love to him. He can't realize that the house he's bought is soon turning empty for not having any members to live in but only the apparitions of pre-slaves including Firs the last. So, both sides of personalities must be corrected to make a better understanding, hope, love and family. Varya shouldn't be disappointed in real life by insensitive persons like Lopakhin.

In another analysis, Chekhov's tragedies display the stalemate conditions of personal and social history where any attempts to improve are self-deleterious. Raymond Williams' observation of such stalemate condition also reflects the existentialist observation of some abstract and rigid deterministic system against

which man must struggle but can hope to obtain nothing except a masochistic pleasure. Let's observe the evidences.

In *Ivanov*, the stalemate is rooted in both Ivanov's and Lebedev's houses and the village as a whole. Ivanov's uncle Shabelsky has no money left and no children. The uncle is a complete misanthrope who disparages others. Anna's sweet piano is "an appalling touch" (4) to him. He defames Dr Lvov, too, "Doctors are like lawyers; only lawyers just rob you, while doctors rob you and murder you as well" (6). At his contact, Anna falls badly sick. The problem of the stalemate is that whoever tries to ameliorate the condition is victimized himself. For example, the most responsible Ivanov gets cramped with the deceitful manager, the nagging doctor, the misanthropic uncle, and the sick wife. In a year now, Ivanov's lost all his strength, "God, how I despise myself […]. Less than a year ago, I was strong and well, I was cheerful, tireless, and dynamic. […]. But now, oh God! I ’m worn out, I’ve no faith, I spend days and night doing nothing. My brain doesn't obey me. Nor do my arms and legs" (42). At the Lebedev's, too, work has ceased to exist. Mrs. Babakin observes, "Oh, what a bore, everyone walking about or sitting around like a lot of stuffed dummies" (32). And it's true because Mr. Lebedev does nothing except drinking 24 hours. At Irina's birthday, the First Guest wants nothing but eat up everything, "God, what people! You get so bored and ravenous, like a howling, man-eating tiger" (30). They unhesitatedly play and gossip about "rotten game of bridge" (52). Only Sasha worries about society but it makes her lose her own love. She defends Ivanov for being very responsible about his house and wife. But when Lvov and many others are always berating him that he's killed his wife by not loving her and is wedding Sasha now for pocketing dowry, Ivanov can't save his prestige. This man never wants dowry though but never gets support and compliments from others in his noble decisions. He

certainly feels hurting himself by living longer and longer life in such tremendous circumstances, "And now look how cruelly life, the life I challenged, is taking its revenge" (61). In his attempts to correct the society, he rather becomes "heavy-headed, dull-witted, worn-out, broken, shattered, without faith and love, with no aim in life […]" (61). The stalemate condition leaves him only one choice left. He suicides for all the experiences the society has offered him. Anna's also out of love, another victim in the stalemate society.

The Seagull opens with the stalemate. Masha is absolutely bored with her life: "MEDVEDENKO. Why do you wear black all the time? / MASHA. I'm mourning for my life, I'm unhappy" (67). She becomes the sixth member in Medvedenko's poor family that lives on 23 rubbles a month of the man's salary. She lives with the hope that her husband's salary will increase but it's only promised, never fulfilled. Secondly, the stalemate is so pervaded in Treplev's play that it has eaten up the whole life. Not the attempt of a person or a society has gone in vain here but that of the nature itself. The World Spirit speaks of a more profound power than that of Becket's *Endgame* deserting the earth:

> For thousands of centuries Earth has not borne one living creature, and in vain does that poor moon light her lamp. No longer do cranes awake and call in the meadows and no may-beetles can be heard in the lime-grooves. It's cold, cold, cold. Empty, empty, empty. Terrible, terrible, terrible. [Pause.] The bodies of living creatures have turned to dust and eternal matter has converted them into stones, water, clouds." (75)

In *The Seagull*'s world, Treplev is a tiny example of the stalemate. He attempts to promote theatrical arts by introducing new themes and new techniques. But his own mother and Trigorin pique his art as rubbish. The old-art hegemony, the mother's null

financial support, and Trigorin's insincere poaching of his aspiring love Nina fetter Treplev unable to create anything new. The stalemate has already finished his moral grounds before he does to himself.

While attempts are made but return self-damaging in other tragedies, even attempts are not made in *Uncle Vanya.* The very time to work has been wasted by talks only, so that the situations are worse and worse everyday. In Voynitsky's family, the gout-bearing professor Serebryakov and his mermaid-blood wife Helen are the main sources of the stalemate. Since the professor whines the whole night and sleeps the whole morning, the house-routine has been disturbed very badly. Voynitsky has ceased working because the environment is choking him every time. He only ponders how long his life has been being wasted at the service of this old meaningless man. Helen's arrival, on the other hand, disturbs Astrov greatly. It's a month he's quit works upon sick people and his woods. He accosts this when he finds being a victim: "You and your husband bring havoc wherever you go. I'm quite sure of this. If you'd stayed on here, we'd have a full-scale disaster on our hands. It would have been the end of me and you wouldn't have come out it too well either" (163). But the stalemate condition outside in their society is even more pervasive. Dr. Astrov reports many poor situations where no attempts have been made to improve. To Marina, he reports a typhoid epidemic of Malitskoye village where no health institution is helping the poor. Astrov describes "Fifth, stench, smoke everywhere and calves on the floor mixed up with patients - little pigs as well" (120). With maps, he reports the tragedy of the whole district to Helen where it's too difficult for people to feed their children. They're overusing the nature for today without repair, thus damaging their every tomorrow:

> But you see nothing of the sort has happened. Our district still has the same old swamps and mosquitoes, the same terrible roads, the same poverty, typhus, diptheria, the same fire breaking out all over the place. The point is, everything's gone downhill because people have found the struggle for existence too much for them, because they are backward and ignorant, because they haven't the faintest idea what they're doing. Shivering with cold, hungry and ill, man wants to hang on to what's left on his life, wants to protect his children, and so he clutches instinctively and blindly at anything that might fill his belly and keep him warm. He destroys everything with no thought for the morrow. And now pretty well everything has been destroyed, but so far nothing new has been put in this place. [Coldly.] I can see this bores you. (148)

All attempts to fulfil their dreams result to be self-limiting in *Three Sisters,* too. Particularly, all three sisters expect that Andrew at least would go to Moscow and be a lecturer. The family has invested a lot to make him a learned man with university education and the knowledge of French, English, and Germany. But, not only Andrew, everyone is gradually engulfed by the frustrating atmosphere of the village. A significantly high-esteemed person like Andrew has been turned into an insignificant bug due to rigid circumstantial forces. Masha metaphorically links Andrew to a huge bell: "I am going to burst. [Looking at Andrew as he pushes the pram.] There goes brother Andrew. All our hopes have come to nothing. Imagine hundreds of people hoisting a huge bell. Then after all the effort and money spent on it, it suddenly falls and is smashed to pieces. Suddenly fails and is mashed to pieces. Suddenly, for no reason at all" (226). Himself an example of an insignificant being in

the stalemate world, Andrew expresses the general sadness: "Why is it we've hardly started living before we all become dull, drab, boring, lazy, complacent, useless, and miserable? […] We've never produced a single scholar or artist or anyone else with a touch of originality to make us envy him or decide we're damn well going to do one better ourselves. All these people do is eat, drink, and sleep till they drop down dead" (231). Andrew's frustration shows people unable to attempt any significant work. They're losing their life standards day by day. They're futile in any of their attempts.

The stalemate in *The Cherry Orchard* is that Mrs. Ranevsky can do nothing in saving the cherry land from being sold. Due to her blind love to her past heritage, she can't even lease the land for summer cottages as Lopakhin suggests. She opposes her birth-love to the land, "I was born here, my father and my mother lived here, and my grand-father, too. I love this house. Without the cherry orchard, life has no meaning to me […]. My little boy was drowned here, you know" (275). But her sentiments become the stalemate here that is pointless to the new capitalistic upsurge. It can't protect the land in debt for such a prodigal woman who spends money like water. Trofimov detests it in both Ranevsky and Gayev: "They still don't know the meaning of hard work. They call themselves an intelligentsia but they speak to their servants as inferiors and treat the peasants like animals […]. What they've got is dirt, vulgarity, and squalor. I loathe all these earnest faces" (260). So people like Ranevsky who marry a drunk, go to dates with foreign lovers, always hate work, behave demeaningly with servants are now the stalemate of the society. Ranevsky loses her land before her eyes for being inadaptable. Her inadaptability and sentiments are the stalemate of the play. While, in other minor issues, even if Ranevsky has sincere attempts to improve relation, she remains unsuccessful. For example, in spite of her complete devotion to recuperate her sick lover in Paris, he deserts her heart: "I bought a villa near Menton

because he fell ill there and for three years I had no rest nursing him day and night. He utterly wore me out. All my feelings seemed to have dried up inside me. Then last year when the villa had to be sold to pay my debts, I left for Paris where he robbed me, deserted me, and took up with another woman" (263). Similarly, she wants Trofimov to join study and marry Anya. But Trofimov never goes to university. She appeals Lopakhin to understand and marry Varya. But Lopakhin diverts the talk to business and ignores it. These instances show that circumstances are against Ranevsky and her styles of living. Whoever she tries to tie up the relation with, the ropes don't stretch any more. From the sky comes "the sound of a breaking string. It dies away sadly" (267, 294).

What's more, Chekhov's tragedies share modern philosophical thoughts along with his own visions of life. Many of Chekhov's mouth-speaking characters are attached to the ideas of philosophers and writers like Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Brecht, Pirandello, etc in a small list. A few excerpts below from his tragedies elucidate this.

Nina's reflections in *The Seagull* explain Schopenhauer's concept of "ordinary morality" in human that inflicts and injuries one another. Nina would believe that famous people had noble activities unlike the behaviours of the common public. Now, she finds people's status doesn't define them, what does is their instinctive nature. By nature, man is prone to self-beneficiary chances and evils. She knows this when she sees Irina rebutting the pristine theatrical attempts of Treplev and Trigorin attracted to fish in a pond like a simple fisherman - to fish in an innocent girl like her. In her own words, "I thought famous people were proud and standoffish, I thought they despised common herd […] But here they're crying, fishing, playing cards, laughing, and losing their tempers like anyone else" (87). Schopenhauer has

said the same. People's normality of suffering inevitably fosters them to the power of evil. In *The Seagull,* the abhorrent Irina never consoles but damages her son's avant-gardism in art. Similarly, Trigorin gives false career-promises to Nina and consumes her youth and beauty taking in the city. Schopenhauer also says the tragic hero shouldn't only submit his life alone but also the will to live, so that his sacrifice lets the life-indulgent people understand the evils of life they can never ameliorate. Treplev surrenders not only life but also the will to live.

Chekhov's tragedies are the base-camps to later Pirandello's ideas. Some of Chekhov's characters believe reality can never be known in full. In Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the stage-director and actors would never learn how to exactly represent the lives of the characters. Ivanov reminds Lvov that one can't know everything about another person by simply staying together. Lvov, being a doctor, may not have understood how people should maintain familial and social relations. Ivanov convinces, "No, Doctors, we all have too many wheels, screws, and valves to judge each other on first impressions or one or two pointers. I don't understand you, you don't understand me, and we don't understand ourselves" (44). Similarly, Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* opines that death doesn't bring death. When Gayev feels reluctant to work since death is inevitable for everyone, Trofimov asks, "Why be sure of that? And what does it mean anyway, 'to die'? Perhaps man has a hundred senses and perhaps when he dies, he loses only five senses, while the other ninety- five live on" (266). This thought also says reality is too far subtle and unexplored. So much so that Chebutykin doubts his own reality of being alive. Talking morosely to himself about his poor performance as a doctor, he says, "Perhaps I'm not even a human being, perhaps, I only pretend to have arms and legs and a head, perhaps I don't even exist at all, and only imagine I walk about and eat

and sleep. [Weeps.] Oh, how nice not to exist" (211). Beyond Pirandello's, this vision blends the philosophies of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and the absurdist as well. In brief, through these characters, Chekhov's transforming the idea of anti-realism that doubts the reality. The Father for example in *Six Characters*…is modelled from here following Chekhov's guidelines.

Nietzsche states that the world will is constantly proliferating forms into lives. These lives are mere appearances that must destroy in the perpetual process of continuing the chain of existence in terms of life and death. Chebutykin often expresses Nietzsche's vision in T*hree Sisters.* Once, he drops a porcelain clock and it breaks down. Irina senses a loss of her mother's keepsake for them. At this, Chebutykin says, "No doubt it was your mother's if you say so, but what if I didn't break it, what if we only think I did? What if we only think we exist and aren't really here at all? I know nothing and nobody knows anything, either" (213). Chebutykin not only doubts he's broken the clock but also the existence of life itself. And it's true if we cite Nietzsche that we're mere appearances of the extravagant fecundity of the world will. Chebutykin is Nietzschean in his sense. In a bit different mode, Nietzsche blames our insatiable hunger for existence to our pride of being the primal Being. To put it differently, people have hubris due to the illusion that they can control over existence. Voynitsky fires at Serebryakov for example, or Andrew defends the wrongdoings of Natasha in the name of love. However, such proud and insatiable urges in human are exculpable. Sonya consoles uncle Vanya at the end of the play saying, "We shall see all the evils of this life, all our own sufferings vanish in the flood of mercy which will fill the whole world" (167). This is according to Nietzsche's belief that the eternal life above remains unaffected by and exculpates the existential life on the earth.

Among these many issues raised, Chekhov's typically common theme in all these tragedies is also important to note. The theme is the urge for work. Chekhov's shown people idly spending their time in talking and visiting. He's shown the worklessness as the main reason or their stalemate lives. He hopes the society can be improved with people swearing that they'll work. In his all tragedies, many characters learn and share with us that work is essential for a happier life even though no human knows what the real purpose of our life is or where we've come from and are going to.

In *The Seagull*, although Astrov doesn't know about "what our real business in life is" (127), he'd plant new woods every year apart from treating sick people. He convinces that reforestation will teach man appreciate the beauty and glorify the life on earth. Sonya receives Astrov's job this way: "Forests alleviate harse climate. In countries with a mild climate, less effort is spent on struggle for existence, so that men and women are gentler and more affectionate.[…] Art and learning flourish among them, their philosophy is cheerful and they treat their womenfolk with a great courtesy and chivalry" (127). Helen compares Astrov's tree-planting hobby with a saint's life, "When he plants a tree, he's already working out what the result will be in a thousand year's time, already glimpsing man's future happiness. People like that are rare and should be cherished" (142). Certainly, Chekhov hopes that reforestation could be one of the most urgent works for restoring happiness to our posterity. Along with new forests, Astrov has wider vision of works for a prosperous future. He shares with Helen that construction works are urgent now: "If roads and railways had been built in place of ravaged woodlands, if we had factories, workshops, and schools; the peasants would have become healthier, better-off, and more intelligent" (148). After the dramatic climax, the sense of work grows really stronger in Uncle Vanya, too.

Even Serebryakov has nothing else for the last appeal to Voynitsky but, "You should get down to work, gentleman. What we need is a bit of action" (164). Definitely, the laziness and boredom in this world has come due to the absence of work. Sonya supports, "We shall work for others - now and in our old age - never knowing any peace" (167). Voynitsky, too, feels comfortable now with "Work - must work" (165). Chekhov's intention is: people should work to improve their lives.

Three Sisters has probably got the highest urge for work. Before experiencing the bitter world, Irina at twenty hopes that she and everyone will work diligently to eradicate all sorts of stalemate from the society: "[…] and soon it's going to blast out of our society all the laziness, complacency, contempt for work, rottenness, and boredom. I'm going to work and in twenty-five or thirty years' time, everyone will work. Everyone" (174). After four years, she learns that the narrow-scopes or the province has thrashed them about unproductive. After her only hope Tuzenbakh has been killed, the winterly cold enters into her life. Yet, she's determined to work and live the life of sufferings: "[…] it'll soon be the winter, with everything buried in snow, and I shall work, work, work" (237). Next to three sisters, Vershinin also departs wishing, "If we could only combine education with hard work, and hard work with education" (233). His worry of and urge for education is comparable to Tuzenbakh's. Tuzenbakh does know the best that our existence, whether live or dead, is utterly meaningless. Yet, he wishes to die tired of work: "For once in my life, I'd like to put in a hard day's work that would bring me home in the evening ready to drop down on my bed dead-tired and fall straight asleep" (198).

Chekhov's another philosopher Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* also has an appeal for work: "It's time we stop admiring ourselves. The only thing is to do work" (265). We see in the play the failure of worklessness and the success of work-busy

life. Ranevsky's family, to whom Trofimov points his suggestion, is shown dismantled and destroyed due to the aristocratic notion of workless life with exploitation of the servants and maids. But now, the progeny of serfs have become like Lopakhin the owners of lands due to their incessant labours of day and night.

All in all, the urgency of work is an equally strong theme Chekhov delivers through his tragedies. Work is a common term. He wants his characters and the spectators to join whatever work is possible for them. It can be urban sanitation, reforestation, teaching at a school, defending the nation as an army, working in the plantations, or of any sorts. For Chekhov, all works are equal - none big, none small. And since we don't know what the real work is we're destined to do by our creator, we should do whatever work is reachable to us. This way, Chekhov believes that even if we don't get the desired success and happiness, we feel comfortable for fulfilling our responsibility of a human being and thus have a sense of living - futile or meaningful whatever.

Poetic Qualities in Chekhov's Tragedies

Every great playwright should also have some distinguishing poetic qualities in their plays. These qualities are marked by aesthetic, philosophical, and socio-cultural influences of the period upon the author. In this culture, while some playwrights before used decent diction and manner for high- and colloquial expressions for low-rank people, others like Shakespeare have preferred verse dialogues and figurative uses of language. Writers since the realistic movement are adept in establishing everyday prose language suited to modern characters. In further attempts, if Shah's used highly persuasive speeches in his social plays, Beckett's used almost no language but symbolic settings and props. In the same genre tragedy, how has Chekhov stood distinguished?

Use of figurative words and sounds is a major quality Chekhov shares with a lot many other dramatists. Remember Nora's banging of the door in *A Doll House,* the beheading of the bird in *Miss Julie,* or metaphoric expressions and death imageries in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; Chekhov has economically used all sorts of them in his tragedies. Let's observe them.

Ending a play with epiphanic sound as that of Ibsen's *A Doll House* is similar in Chekhov's tragedies. He's basically used gun-shot for it. The playwright has witnessed that he couldn't do away with the conventional use of "a revolver shot." Actually, this sound's a motif used in all four plays except *The Cherry Orchard.* In *Ivanov,* it's a gun-shot with which Ivanov changes his blamed stance of a social scoundrel to a dignified hero. His suicide astounds the living characters and general audiences because their social evils have compelled him to die. In *The Seagull,* Dr Dorn existentially interprets the self-shot of Treplev as "a bottle of ether's exploded" (115). Dorn's comment parodies the role of Doctor in *Everyman.* Treplev's tragic end in spite of his avant-garde upsurges in arts is one of many such instances in this world. Such absurdity of human life is the system of the earth. So, its significance is no greater than a chemical reaction in a medicine bottle, Treplev's death is as insignificant to the absurd world as an ether-bottle's explosion. Likewise, the revolver-shot in *Three Sisters* is equally excruciating. But while Vanya misfires onstage at the defiling professor Serebryakov in *Uncle Vanya,* it's "a muffled sound of distant shot" (234) in *Three Sisters* that slowly and gradually reaches to the ears of the destined heroine Irina as the murder of her fiancé Tuzenbakh. Her only partner to her Moscow dream is reported killed in a duel with a revolver-shot. The three sisters are left with bare reality of life as the gun-shot switches off the last hope left, thus ending the tragedy.

Music - violin, harp, piano, accordion, or any such sound - is another motif Chekhov has scarcely written without. In his five tragedies, music is basically played in the background, sad in tune, and associated with the dying characters. So, music has become indolence in boredom and depression. In *The Seagull,* Treplev indulges in a "melancholy waltz" (104) when he reflects that he couldn't help Nina from being ruined like a seagull. He's always "playing the piano" (110) as he sees his new arts being derided by hack writers and actors. His "sad waltzes" (108) off-stage have really made the mood of the play sound tragic. Similarly, offstage music is always indicating some death in *Three Sisters,* whether it's piano, violin, harp, accordion, guitar, or even stove noise. Tuzenbakh, who's the representative pianist among the major characters, is killed at last. He's been asked to get up a concept in aid of the fire-victims of nearby village. But his death is hinted by the stove noise in Act Two: "MASHA. What a noise the stove's making. The wind howled in the chimney before father died, made a noise just like that" (194). Andrew also plays violin initially, but since Act-Two, we see him indulging more in reading books instead to playing music. Happy music is never heard in the house due to the vixenous Natasha. She rescinds a concert in their house faking her children's sleep would be disturbed. In Act Four, two musicians play a sad tune on "a violin and a harp" (232) at their garden. The tune also reflects other people's tragedy in general carried in their music. In *Ivanov,* too, Anna who of tuberculosis in the course of the play, is expected to entertain Shabelsky with "piano and cello" (3) indoors, but she's never able to. The misanthrope Shabelsky feels a damned bore with her as we observe since Act One itself: "[off-stage, his voice's heard through the window]. It's no use us playing together. You have no more ear for music than a stuffed trout and you have an appalling touch" (4). The protagonists don't die in other two plays and so it's not they but side-characters play

music there. In Act Two of *The Cherry Orchard*, Yepikhodov is "heard playing his guitar offstage, the same sad tune as before" (270). But here the sound of a "breaking string" (267/294) and "axe" (286)/294) are repeatedly heard offstage and they are more pathetic. The two most seriously symbolize the tragedy of the passing generation of Madam Ranevsky, Gayev, and their land. A distant axe cutting a tree of 100s of years old sounds really desolate. Except Firs being locked up in, when all go out in the last act, "The stage is empty, the sound of the doors being locked, then of carriage leaving. It grows quiet. In the silence, a dull thud is heard. The noise of an axe striking a tree. It sounds sad and lonely" (294). They symbolize the end of the long-lived aristocratic life. The two shocking sounds are also accompanied by "the owl hooting and the samovar humming" (267). "The owl hooting" (16) is also a motif that Anna in *Ivanov* also listens as a sad and melancholic sound. Only in the last act of *Uncle Vanya*, the guitar played by Telegin has a positive note in soothing Ivanov and Sonya in finding "peace" (167), but that, too, in the mirage of hope.

Besides the motifs of sharp gunshots, different sad musical sounds, and absurd card-games; Chekhov's tragedies have various occurrences of figurative expressions. Some of them typically relate to the existential trivialities or meaninglessness of the earth as philosophized by Nietzsche or Sartre or later Beckett.

Levedev's images best embody his – and thus general people's – dependence on earthly phenomenal orders, that are rather absurd for at least Ivanov who's deeply explored the meaninglessness of both earthly things and human attempts with them. Talking to Mrs Babakin, Lebedev asserts "all things nice" (19) in an analogy of the availability of "sugar and spice" (19). See how easy it's for him to find meaning in the daily living. In the next occasion, he's convincing Ivanov that the terrestrial system

and our conception of it are both correct and satisfactory; and so Ivanov should marry Anna without any hesitation:

> Listen, Nicholas. To you this is very clever and subtle and follows the laws of psychology, but to me it's a fiasco, a disaster. Listen to an old man for the last time. What I want to say is – relax! Take the simple view of things like everyone else. Everything in the world is simple. The ceiling's white, boots are black, sugar's sweet. You love Sasha, she loves you. If you love her, stay with her. If you don't love her, go away and we don't hold it against you. What could be simpler? You're healthy, intelligent, decent people. You've enough to eat, thank God, and you've clothes on your back." (60)

`` But would life be that simple as understanding ceiling, boots, and sugar; Ivanov wouldn't probably be a tragic hero. For him, people and circumstances are in a state of clash as Sartre says and you don't reach where you go. Ivanov poetically personifies the vague apprehension of his brain, legs, arms and land for their complexities and uncontrollabilities. They have made him a complete pessimist, "[…] God! I'm worn out, I've no faith; I spend days and nights doing nothing. My brain doesn't obey me, nor do my arms and legs. The estate's going rack and ruin, the woods fall before the axe. [Weeps.] My land seems to look at me like a lost child" (42).

Yet, Chekhov's very skilful in creating a complete contrast. Against Ivanov who has no value left on terrestrial living, we see minor characters like Kosykh who're completely submerged in the worldly trivialities such as card- games. Kosykh's monologue in Act Two is really humorous: "I had the ace, king, queen, and seven small diamonds, the ace of spades and one - one tiny heart but she couldn't

declare a little slam, damn her!" (30). How sick he's to possess a win to the card heroes! Or symbolically, it's been said that winning titles in life is as fruitless as winning them in cards.

The title of *The Seagull* is the major symbol in this play. Spoken at least five times in the tragedy, the seagull is basically attached to first Nina's life and then Treplev's lost new-arts. An seagull actually has an attractive marine world. But once a fisherman traps it, it's not only deprived of water but killed. Likewise, once Nina's attracted to the outsider Trigorin's career, thereby ignoring Treplev's love; Treplev predicts her future life as that of the dead seagull he's killed and laid at her feet to look/ show it like her. Nina doesn't understand it at that, "The seagull's a symbol, too, but it makes no sense to me, sorry!" (87). But, when she's been consumed and abandoned by Trigorin, it makes her difficult to accept: "I'm a seagull. No that's wrong. Remember you [Treplev] shot a seagull? A man [Trigorin] happened to come along, saw it and killed it, just to pass the time. A plot of a short story. No that's wrong. [Wipes her forehead.]" (114). In the game of seagull, Treplev has lost his beloved and the new art ethics, and Nina her otherwise prestigeable career.

Second to seagull is the symbol of dog in chain. The animal embodies Sartre's philosophy of people trapped by situation. The chained dog is the retired official Sorin in his own estate (the chain). Early in the play, he talks to Treplev:

Country life doesn't suit me, boy, and I shall never get used to this place. […] At one time I'd take a month off and come down here for a break and so on, but there'd be so much fuss and bother when you got here – you felt like pushing off the moment you arrived. [Laugh.] It was always glad to get away. Anyway now I'm retired I have nowhere to go, that's what it comes to. I've to live here, like it or not. (68)

This way, Sorin's trapped at last in this tragedy in the place he was born. He's unable to escape and live a new life as would be in a comedy. Beyond hope, he merely wishes he could be free of this trite situation in the name of chained and howling dog: "Masha, would you mind asking your father to have that dog let off its chain? It's always howling" (68). Or "I can hear that dog howling again. [To SHARMAYEV] Be a good fellow, Sharmayev, and have it let off its chain" (79).

Thirdly, Chekhov in this play seems almost completely attached to Shakespeare as seen in *Hamlet*; only the horse-riding prince Hamlet is walking on ground as a public son Treplev. Gertrude is surviving as Irina who's unable to help her son being in an adulterous love with Trigorin (Hamlet's Claudius, and Treplev's major antagonist.) To express his anger at this, Treplev quotes Hamlet's lines directly: "Nay, but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and love/ over the nasty sty-" (74). He finds Irina "in corruption" in supporting the hack writer, Trigorin, for adulterous love and sniffing at his new art-fervours. *The Mouse Trap* metamorphises into Treplev's (Beckett's *Endgame* looking) play of two hundred thousand years later story. But, people don't understand Treplev as Sharmayev comments: "The stage has gone down hill, Irina, once we had giants, now we've only dwarfs" (74). Treplev dies when his giants were unrecognized.

Actually, there're innumerable symbols Chekhov's created as his own in other plays, too. In *Uncle Vanya*, a huge moustache, mermaid's blood, waffles, and old fossil are the main. Astrov's long moustache represents the stalemate of the play's world. In particular, Astrov was very active, overworking man as a doctor, tree-planter, and painter. But it's a month now since he's quit the job and been fruitlessly courting on Helen, the mermaid. In that, too, when Helen offers Sonya instead, he

confesses his frustration: “You know perfectly well why I come here everyday. Why I come and who I come to see, that you know perfectly well. Don’t look at me like that you little vampire, I’m not exactly new to this game. [. . .] For a whole month, I have nothing at all; let everything slide because I simply have to see you” (150). And as he’s already talked to the old nurse Marina, the stalemate life has “grown a huge moustache” (119) in him - “An idiotic moustache. I’ve been a freak, Nanny” (120). Yes, Helen, who’s married the old professor at her youth for money without work, is a reason for Astrov’s and Voynitsky’s workless life. She doesn’t think nursing, teaching, or working in the farm as Sonya is doing now are her jobs. Yet she doesn’t know what to do. Actually she’s one of the agents who halt others from work - to Astrov, Voynitsky, and partially to Sonya. That’s why; she’s been compared to a witch or a mermaid (the legless fish that only makes love, unable to work). Sonya reflects it:

> You’re bored, you don’t know what to do with yourself and boredom and idleness are infections. Look - Uncle Vanya does nothing but trial round after you like a shadow. I’ve left my work and rushed along here to talk to you. And I’ve grown impossibly lazy, Then Dr Astrov used to come here very seldom, once a month - it was hard to get him here at all - but now he visits us everyday and he’s quite abandoned his trees and his patients. You must be a witch.” (144-145)

Then Voynitsky adds, “There’s mermaid’s blood flowing in your veins. So go on. Be a mermaid. Let yourself go for once in your life and fall madly in love with a river-God, dive head first into deep water and leave the learned professor and the rest of us gasping on the shore” (145).

This much for mermaid's blood. Both the Professor in *Uncle Vanya* and Madam Ranevsky in *The Cherry Orchard* belong to old generation. As Ranevsky's prodigal habits and love to the cherry land can't help her survive, Serebryakov's clichéd writing and dominance upon Voynitsky and others won't leave him suitable for the new consciousness sprouting in Voynitsky. To be precise, he's become "an old fossil", safe nowhere but only in museum now. Voynitsky talks to Astrov in Act One about it: "I pity the paper he writes on. He'd do better to work on his autobiography. What a superb subject! A retired professor- an old fossil, if you see what I mean, a sort of academic stuffed trout" (122). The irony that the professor could be skilful only in writing autobiography shows he's good at nothing in art that interests the new consciousness.

Well, not only Helen and Serebryakov or their practices are burdensome to the society, Telegin's too. He himself says he's one of the waffles with "pock-marked face" (124). A waffle is a person without important content. Telegin frequently talks out of contexts. In one instance when Voynitsky's seriously talking to Serebryakov concerning the ownership of the estate, Telegin intervenes with "My brother Gregory's wife's brother, a Mr Konstantin Lakedimonnov - you may possibly know him- was a Master of Arts" (153). This is really nonsense in the context.

Among many song-lines used in *Three Sisters*, Masha's ditty "A green oak by a curving shore / And on that oak, a chain of gold - / And on that oak a chain of gold - " (175, 188, 234) is the refrain of the play and is very symbolic. The song bears a slight hope of success in the Prozorov's children. But, there's very faint possibility as the green oak is on "a curving shore," not in the go-straight land. Actually, the "green oak" or migration to Moscow remains in their dream only. Their hope for a "chain of gold" ironically turns out to be the chain of sufferings and misery and they're left

trapped in their own situations, dying everyday. In Act Four, this resounding song comes twice to Masha. She sobs with it when her love or the green oak - Vershinin leaves the village. Next, she sings it wrong as “A green cat” (234) when the gun-shot of Tuzenbakh’s death interrupts her throat. The green cat symbolizes the dead corpse of her sister’s only partner to Moscow.

In the next symbol, Tuzenbakh merely remains a “lost key” without which “a wonderful grand piano” (230) won’t open. Irina opens up: “[Cries.] I’ve never been in love, never. Oh, I’ve longed for love, dreamed about it so much day and night, but my heart’s like a wonderful grand piano that can’t be used because it’s locked up and the key’s lost” (230). Without Tuzenbakh, her heart never cheers up. The key or the green oak has gone past her life never to appear next.

The play’s a tragedy also because Tuzenbakh, who’s a hero in accurately understanding the course people should take, dies a death so trivial as Murphy in Beckett’s novel. Tuzenbakh envisions people’s lives to be like of “cranes” because they don’t care the incomprehensible law of life and just to on flying: “Think of birds flying south for the winter, cranes for instance. They fly on and on and on, and it doesn’t matter what ideas, big or small, they may have buzzing about inside their heads, they’ll still keep on flying without knowing why they do it or where they are going” (197). Or, it could be an irony or an attack against the incomprehensible, unseen law of life. He dies in a self-willed duel and becomes a “dead tree” as he had earlier proclaimed to Irina, “Look at that dead tree. It’s withered but it still sways in the breeze with all the others. It’s the same with me, I feel I’ll still be a part of life somehow or other even if I die. Good-bye Irina” (230). Surprisingly, his death and calmness as unaffected as a dead tree is probably mocking at the human sufferings God or Nature has appointed on Irina and the Prozorov’s - on us.

Last but not the least is the symbol of "soldier." Actually, everything in the town crumbles when the soldiers start moving away to Poland and Siberia. Soldiers or the orderly system and the defence of the town move deserting the village. Masha loses Vershinin and Irina loses Tuzenbakh in the same process. So, "soldiers" represent the security of the town being crumbled away day by day.

The Cherry Orchard is itself a big symbol in the last play. It represents the fading generation of aristocracy out of the whole Russia and the ghosts of serfs they've trapped so far. Trofimov makes it clear in Act Two with Anna: "All Russia is our orchard. […] Don't you see that from every cherry-tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every trunk, men and women are gazing at you? Don't you hear their voices? Owning living souls […] that we've first got to redeem our past and make a clean break with it?" (269). As the cherry orchard inundates in debts, Gayev says, "The sun is set, my friends" (269). The sun symbolizes the reign of land-owners now rooting out itself. But the subtle tragedy is that the successor, too, is found to be unemotional who can't measure the temperature in the heart of loving-ones. Varya feels the same when she reports to Lopakhin, "Besides, our thermometer's broken" (291). Really, along with capitalistic upsurge, people are losing their emotional drive. Lopakhin's ignoring family-making in acting like "a bull" (241) in business.

Mixing up comical spices is another major feature in Chekhov's tragedies. When it's too often in a play, this could be a reason why Chekhov called his tragic plays like *The Cherry Orchard* comedies. Needles to say, such comical instances are always refreshing audiences amidst serious matters. But they are comical only when taken individually. When they corroborate to the whole story, they rather seem exposing ridiculous follies or malaises of general people. Chekhov has journalistically picked up such trivial details from day-to-day ground-level society and plugged them

primarily in the mouths of the static characters. Underlying them are Chekhov's intentions of corrections or reforms. In doing so, Chekhov at least partially affiliates to the existentialists, realists, and social reformists, like Sartre, Ibsen, and Shah. Some moments have been snapshot below.

In Act-Two of *Ivanov*, Lebedev has just met his dear friend Shabelsky after a long time. He hugs and sings: "In you I love my former suffering/In you I love my wasted youth" (24). But the Count can't stand the drunk's smell and immediately turns to be a misanthrope, "Let me go, please you smell like a distillery" (24). Naturally, the simile "like a distillery" sounds a good humour surfacially. Underneath, we are on the one hand observing a person who's wasted his youth and completely submerged in drinks like Brick in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* On the other hand, Shabelsky's intolerant behaviour resembles Alceste of Mollier's *Misanthrope.* Finally, a person smelling like a distillery also has a touch of absurdist philosophy of life.

Similarly, Shabelsky-Babakin marriage gossip is a major or source of humour in *Ivanov*. Other characters take this relation as Shabelsky's craze on the widow's property. When he meets her at the Lebedev's in Act Two, he femininely expresses his affection as Torvald would do to Nora in *Doll House*: Babakin is the Count's "little pot of gold:"

> SHABELSKY. […] And our plump-like little bit of fluff will soon have her million, too. She gets prettier and plumper every hour of the day - that's what it means to be well-heeled.
>
> MRS BABAKIN. I'm most grateful, my Lord, but I don't particularly like being sneered at.

SHABELSKY. Call that sneering, my little pot of gold! It's just a cry from the heart - the fullness of my heart has unsealed my lips.(25)

Like Shabelsky's eccentricity over dowry, Zinaida is shown very stingy about money. Looking at burning candles, she exclaims: "What a lot of candles - no wonder people think we're rich" (28). Her meanness appears as she puts out all candles saying it's a mere waste of money. She's extreme when she reads a sip of tea left by Shabelsky: "The Count hasn't finished his tea. What a waste of sugar" (28). She reminds Mae and Gooper from Williams' play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* when she hesitates to give dowry to her daughter and frequently asks interests Ivanov has to pay her. Likewise, the money-freak Borkin is an excellent expression of futility on earthly possessions.

When we come to *The Seagull,* Dr Dorn's humorous assertion "A bottle of ether's exploded" (115) on Treplev's self shot death sounds striking. In spite of surface frivolity, it asserts the meaninglessness of a person's death and life before it. This follows the philosophy as perceived by Kierkegaard and other dramatists of the absurd. At Irina's terrified ears of the sound, Dorn at once conceals the news-report of the death and reveals the futileness of human life: "Don't worry. A bottle must have gone of inside my medical bag, don't worry. [Goes out through door, right, and comes back half a minute later.] As I said. A bottle of ether's exploded. [Sings softly.] 'Once more enchanted I appear before thee'" (115).

In another instance, we laugh at the vain self-praise of the hack actress Irina. She represents a typical woman who hesitates to say she's old as most women in cine field do. In her mid 40s, she feels herself much younger than the 22-year girl Masha:

IRINA. Then again I'm most particular, dear, like an Englishman. I keep myself in trim and my clothes and hair are always just right. Do I

> ever go out, even in the garden, with my housecoat on, without doing my hair? No, I don't. That's why I've lasted so well, because I've never been slovenly and let myself go like some I could mention. [Scrolls up and down the lawn, arms a akimbo.] See what I mean? Just like a dear little robin. I could play a girl of fifteen. (82)

But she doesn't know that her attractions of youth or her looks like "a dear little robin" are just appearances of man's feeling of Supreme Being. Chekhov knows it because he's read Nietzsche's view on tragic arts.

In *Uncle Vanya*, it may be humorous that Vanya confesses his love to his sister's husband's second wife Helen whenever they two separately meet on the stage. Voynitsky fancies to have met her 10 years ago, fallen in love, and married by now. Then, would there be a storm that night, "She'd be scared of the thunder and I'd hold her in my arms and whisper, 'Don't be afraid, I'm here!' Oh what wonderful thoughts, I could laugh for sheer joy" (135). But the opportunity has missed now and so his youth. Nevertheless, he confesses that he feels "the happiest man on earth" if Helen is always in his eyes. Helen also confesses that the old professor is overwrought and boring. Whereas since her boredom with the old man and Vanya's boredom with the lost youth match, she accepts her attachment with this man: "Do you know why I and you are such good friends, Vanya? It must be because we're both such abysmal bores" (129). Although this love doesn't turn to marriage as Abbie-Eben love in *Desire under the Elms*, it has much in common with the latter. Like Eugene O'Neil, Chekhov's attempted a naturalistic presentation. Both loves develop due to the imprisoned lives of failure and boredom. The main source of boredom in both is an old man: Serebryakov and Ephraim respectively.

The Cherry Orchard has got comparatively more moments of humours than other plays. Pischik, Yepikhodov, Dunyasha, Charlotte, Gayev, and Trofimov are all characterized by different humorous typicalities. An instance with bankrupt Pishchik is selected here. Pishchik is always worried of paying loan interest as a hungry dog is always worried of its super. Once in the balloon scene of Act Three, he is at once out of mind and sobbing before Trofimov when he finds no money in his pocket: "Forging a few bank- notes is about my only way out. I've to pay three hundred and thirty. [Feels his pocket in alarm.] My money's gone! I've lost my money! [Through tears.] Where's it? [Happily.] Oh, here it's on the lining. That gave me quite a turn" (272). Actually, he's a hypochondriac in terms of money. This often gives a humour to spectators. So much so that when Trofimov agrees he looks like a horse, Pishchik wishes he was it: "Well and why not? The horse's a fine animal. You can sell a horse" (271). That is, he's ready to sell himself if that would give him money. Pishchik represents a person like Mrs Ranevsky and Gayev who as well have mismanaged their business of life and suffered.

Other Elements of Tragedy in Chekhov's Tragedies

This attempt discusses how strongly Chekhov's tragedies confirm to the miscellaneous standards of tragedy as a whole.

First of all, Chekhov's tragedies have copious evidences of modern tragedies. Modern tragedies are personal. That is, the individuals are historically and culturally conditioned. According to Raymond Williams, the protagonists oppose their immediate experiences to the validity of prevailing moral concepts. And, the tragedies sacrifice their protagonists so that the avant-garde and the status quo forces be proportionately distributed in the real targeted societies. In other words, through their deaths, the condition of disorder or the constructed evils are expected to change and

endorse a new order. *Ivanov* and *The Seagull* are good examples in this. In *Ivanov*, repulsion to inter-caste marriage and post-marriage love is the major cultural evil that compels Ivanov to suicide in the struggle against women themselves like Zinaida. And Babakin upbraid that Ivanov's done a nasty mistake marrying the Jewess Anna Sarah. Ivanov introduces scientific farming to prove the couple can be successful but another evil (the manager Borkin's corruptions) ruins his farm. Also, Anna unfortunately catches tuberculosis. Sasha, who is always defending Ivanov, now falls in love with him. But again, Dr Lvov propogandandizes a great slander that Ivanov's abandoned his wife and is attracted to Sasha for a big dowry that he hasn't got in the inter-caste love marriage. Harassed and defeated at this, Ivanov chooses to die, thereby stunning the society on their erroneous norms that have killed a noble hero like Ivanov. The termination of the spectacle with such an audacious and epiphanic death/ suicide is another very common norm in tragedy. Chekhov's used it in *The Seagull,* too. This poses a powerful mockery or questioning to the social evils dramatized in them. A bit differently, in *Three Sisters*; Tuzenbakh's death questions the absurd reign of the unknown over us, the existential beings.

Further penetrating into modern tragedies, realism says people's masked ideals make them blind and lead towards an inevitable fall. Except the forces within human, no other outside forces like God or plague influence in modern tragedies. In this, we can refer to Mrs. Ranevsky's fall in *The Cherry Orchard.* Her self-deceiving notions that she's viable to spend as much for being the owner of such a great cherry land and that cutting down the cherry trees is doing a sin to progeny are two main masks that lead her to collapse. Similarly, naturalism in theatre says man is unable to avoid the environmental and hereditary forces that influence and shape hem; what they can do is only to passively endure the sufferings. *Three Sisters* well demonstrates naturalism.

Olga, Masha, Irina, and Andrew are all nothing but passive sufferers who've been being confined to their bucolic living and resultant frustration due to their father's posting to the village away from Moscow many years ago. Still further, private tragedies, as written by Miller and Williams in the US, dramatize people who're born bare and unaccommodated. For them, peace is possible only in death. Uncle Vanya's characterization best reflects this. He has got nothing of him except his own ageing body. The land where he's been working for 25 years is not his unless he works teeth and bone. There, too, he's never peaceful due to the presence of the irritating old professor and his whining-gout. Thus, Chekhov seems to have deftly used the concepts of realism, naturalism, and private tragedies, too, in his plays.

Besides, many instances of Chekhov's tragedies vividly reflect the issue of existentialist and absurdist theatres. In *The Cherry Orchard*, Trofimov is the philosopher and Firs, a symbol of existential living. Mrs. Ranevsky can't come out of love - she can't abandon her home, the cherry orchard, and her lover from Paris for instance. But she herself admits that Trofimov's "more profound than we are" (275). This's true. Trofimov has no interest in physical trivialities such as bodily pleasures and corporate jobs. They bear no meaning for him. In one instance, Varya suspects that he's in love with Anna. Trofimov abstains it complaining that Varya "has been pestering me and Anna all summer, afraid we might have a love affair. What's it got to do with her? Not that I ever gave her cause to think such a thing, any way, I'm beyond such trivialities. We're above love" (275). Next, Trofimov doesn't believe that people can control or be the agent of events on earth. So, when Mrs. Ranevsky worries if she can avoid the sale of the land, he opines, "What does it matter whether the estate's been sold today or not? That's over and done with. There's no turning back, that avenue is closed. Don't worry, my dear. But don't try to fool yourself, either; for once

in your live you must face the truth" (275). Similarly, Lopakhin has pride in earthly possessions. He ridicules the jobless and penniless Trofimov by ironically offering him 40 thousand roubles if Trofimov joins Moscow University. But Trofimov finds no meaning in jobs, degrees, or possessions, either. He defends, "Your father was a peasant and mine worked in a chemist's shop, all of which prove precisely nothing. If you offer me two hundred thousand, I still wouldn't take it. I'm a free man. And all the things that mean such a lot to you all, whether you're rich or poor- why, they have no more power over me than a bit of thistledown floating on the breeze" (186). These prove that Trofimov holds the principle of the absurdist. His nickname "perpetual student" also suggests it. He wants to confine himself in one title only that never ends. Doing so, he can avoid indulgence in all other things. Sartre and Kierkegaard mean the same for Chekhov's resource. Also later, Beckett models Murphy as almost a similar character for whom the worldly activities hardly mean anything.

Now, let's go to Firs. The name means pinewood and the sound it makes. You listen it sweet but meaningless. Firs' role also exhibits the meaninglessness of the words we speak and information we communicate. He often speaks words that no one understands or out of common context. Ironically, the words we speak and write have no meaning away from the earth. Just arrived from Paris, Mrs Ranevsky receives tea from the old Firs with a compliment, "I'm glad that you're still alive" for which Firs' response is "Today before yesterday" (248). This is totally out of context. Next, Firs' soliloquy at the end of the tragedy is an existentialist observation of man on the earth. Before he lies dead, he reflects to have achieved nothing from so long a life. He judges life a mere waste of time: "[Mutters something that can't be understood.] Life's slipped by just down a bit. You've got no strength left. Got nothing left, nothing at all. You're just a - nincompoop. [Lies motionless.]" (294). This shows everything of the

world - even our corporeal body - is nothing for us when we die. Had one lived, he would have taken something with him. Actually, he can't. Throughout one's life, man must struggle but can hope to obtain no more than a perverted masochistic pleasure in his own futile sufferings. So, one really becomes a meaningless nobody or a "nincompoop" on this earth. Even the death is non-eventful in Firs' case. He dies when all are away. No one to express sorrow; no martyrdom or any kind of lesson from his loss. Death in other tragedies such as *Othello* or *The Seagull* or *Miss Julie* would be valorous or truly sympathetic. But it's meaningless here. Such an unnoticed death is a great questioning on the absurd reign of the Power Unknown or God upon us though. These things strictly stand for existentialism and absurdism. When we have plenty of such evidences in other plays, too, as in the character of Tuzenbakh, Ivanov, and Uncle Vanya in few, we sometimes wonder what new thing Chekhov shares with us.

In a bit different mode, TR Henn in *The Harvest Tragedy* has proposed concentric yielding circles - the First Cause, the Determining Past, and the Present Action - found outside to inside that structuralize every tragedy. Chekhov's tragedies adhere to this concept as well. By the time Vanya has a death wish by Act Four of *Uncle Vanya*, the stalemate has engulfed his house totally. After 25 years now, Vanya is nothing now than the same vigorous worker in the farm. It's a month now and even that work has ceased to exist due to the arrival of Serebryakov and Helen in the estate. Dr. Astrov too is bereft of this job and fruitlessly wandering now. He points out the dirty atmosphere of the whole country hindering them from success despite their incessant wishes for it. Astrov opens to Vanya, "In our whole district there were only two decent civilized people - you and I. But 10 years or so of this contemptible, parochial existence have completely got us down. This filthy atmosphere's poised our

blood and we've become as second rate as the rest of them" (161). This shows that even the best people of a vicinity can't correct their determining past. Astrov and Vanya can't change the polluted blood they're born. Their present struggles are trapped by the rods that are inescapably fixed by the first cause or the cruel Nature. People can faintly observe their deterministic past but don't even notice the proponent of this. Astrov's monologue asserts Chekhov's adherence to Helen's concentric yielding circles that shut all-side doors to success.

Next, Vershinin also comprehends the determining past in *Three Sisters*. The past has limited Vershinin to a wife of frequent suicide-impulses and without any parental love to her two children. This has made him a vulnerable hero seeking reconstruction in his life - another wife and family that could be better. But he knows the past is incorrigible and insurmountable: "you obviously can't hope to prevail against the forces of ignorance around you. As you go on living, you'll have to give way bit by bit to these hundred thousand people and be swallowed up in the crowd. You'll go under […] (182). This shows each protagonist in tragedy is shown handicapped by the overriding past history of his family and society. Vershinin merely wishes, "our past life could be just the rough draft, so to speak, and we could start the new one on a fresh sheet of paper" (183). But due to such past deterministic forces, this is impossible for all Olga, Masha, Irina, Andrew, and Tuzenbakh.

Likewise, in *The Cherry Orchard*, Trofimov knows success is impossible unless they could, "redeem our past and make a clean break with it" (269). The past history of Mrs. Ranevsky's generation is "Owning living souls" (269) of the serfs. And the only way to exculpate the past is to sell the orchard and free the pages and maids they've been slaving to date. But the tragedy is that the owners Ranevsky and Gayev are the products of aristocratic tag that they can't throw. They say that the

cherry orchard is the only remarkable thing across Russia and also recorded in Encyclopaedia. So, it's a crime for them to sell the land. Their blind reverence to the past shows that past is undeletable for them. Let's see how Gayev worships an antique book-case, "Dear most honoured book-case. In you I salute an existence devoted for over a hundred years to the glorious ideals of virtue an justice" (251).Here, too, the same inerasable concept and presence of the past makes these two people mere puppets of victimization. Or as Henn says, Chekhov's tragedies, too, dramatize past and present in a specific relation of cause and effect. Obviously, the more we analyze Chekhov's tragedies, the more they adduce to the conventions.

Finally, in Henn's 14 major propositions of a tragedy, he gives the three fold basic materials of tragedy: divine or human laws, division or conflict within such laws, and division or conflict within such laws, and responsibility of the confronted individuals with such a division. As everywhere, Chekhov's tragedies reflect them without moving a single hair. In an understanding, the major human laws of *Ivanov* is inter-caste marriage or extra-marital love shouldn't be accepted, of *The Seagull* is new artists don't write anything remarkable, and of *Uncle Vanya* is wife's property can be comfortably possessed of as your own. Similarly, the suburban frustration can't be avoided and the predecessor's values must be protected are the questioned notions of *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* respectively. As we've seen before ,the characters' immediate experiences - Ivanov's weeding with a Jewish Anna; Treplev's experiments with a new drama; Voynitsky's 25 years of faithful subservience to his sister's estate; the Prozorovs' dreams, interests, willingness, and possibility of moving to their childhood home Moscow; and Lopakhin's acute observations of emerging capitalistic waves - strongly oppose the established laws. Now, all these responsible people must struggle (to death sometimes) for the freedom from the old laws and

enrichment of the humanity. And all of them have left no stones unturned for it. Ivanov tries his best to correct the ill-bred people like Dr Lvov, Borkin, Zinaida, etc and even suicides for the establishment of the new values. Treplev does the same, too. Uncle Vanya resumes to work and suffering as usual after he's defeated Serebryakov in claiming the ownership on the land and then driven the couple out of the estate. All hopes shattered, Olga still says, "But our sufferings will bring happiness to these who come after us, peace and joy will reign on earth, and there'll be kind words and kind thoughts for us and our times" (237). And, Lopakhin convinces from his heart that Ranevsky should rent her land for business. When she doesn't act, he buys the land himself to utilize it in the new way. All these remind us that Chekhov's tragedies prolifically practise within the conventions of tragedy.

IV. Conclusion

What's the production then? Do Chekhov's tragedies adhere to the poetics of human suffering? How far has Chekhov adopted the forms and conventions of tragedies in terms of setting, plot, characterization, dialogue, themes, and other elements of tragedy? Below is the outcome of the analysis in a nutshell.

Both the time and locale settings of Chekhov's tragedies are found acquiescing to the common practices. Like any arts written so far, his tragedies locate at the historio-cultural scenario of the contemporary Russia. And more importantly, they capture the interim period of transformation when old institutions or values are at the death-bed and the protagonists sacrifice themselves for the new ones at the threshold. *The Cherry Orchard* for example is sacrificing the nincompoop aristocracy and attempting to institutionalize the inchoating capitalism in the late nineteenth century Russia. Or, *The Seagull* captures the struggle against melodramatic trends of playwrighting and anticipates the onset of avant-garde art forms. Basically, their exquisite settings of bucolic atmosphere assimilate to those of maximum modern tragedies such as *A Doll House*, *Miss Julie,* or *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Like private tragedies, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, etc. locate in a vicinity that is submerged in the stalemate with amelioration a mere illusion. These findings prove that Chekhov's tragedies bind into the same norms as theorized by Raymond Williams and many others.

It’s true that Chekhov’s plot constructions are unique in avoiding clear-cut designation and clash between the protagonistic and antagonistic agents. So is in relinquishing royal or political issues but stories from ordinary social lives. Still, he’s extraordinary in complexly demonstrating the unity of action and other features of tragedy culminating into disintegration or death. The five major tragedies have the

same four-act plot division. *Three Sisters* primarily has sorrowful lifestyles of four tragic individuals. But the analysis has observed that all Olga, Masha, Irina, and their brother Andrew within a single context of provisional disillusionment. Children of the same father, they hope to move to Moscow for successful urban careers yet never escape the traps of their provincial circumstances and sufferings of love, schools, charity, family, society, etc. Chekhov's new style doesn't banish Masha but departs her from her lover Vershinin. The battery-commander leaves for Poland. Similarly, it doesn't kill Irina but Tuzenbakh, her only partner to Moscow. However, these separations and deaths are the same harbingers of derangement in the Prozorov's family. In the same way, Mrs. Ranevsky doesn't have to die in *The Cherry Orchard*; their oldest servant Firs' death and transformation to a ghostly image is even more subtle and stronger to indicate the death-knell of long-lived aristocracy. What's more, the plot constructions of *Ivanov* and *The Seagull* have been studied to be best matching to *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* respectively. In other feathers of tragic plot, there're clear instances of human hubris leading to climax, anagnorisis, peripetia, and dramatic irony in Chekhov's tragedies. They also have flash-back, flash-forward, off-stage reports, soliloquies, monologues, and choric contemplations. In *Uncle Vanya,* Dr Astrov foreshadows the stupid and sordid atmosphere of the Voynitsky village; while in tragic discovery, the latter self-discovers in a soliloquy how his life has been ruined along with the twenty-five years of surveillance to the old boring professor. The analysis has depicted how Sonya reflects upon the fate of herself, her Uncle, and all humans on the earth. Her monologue resembles the role of the ancient Choragus.

Chekhov seems to have done everything possible in characterization. He's shaped more specific and equal-to-life characters who confirm to the theory of modern tragedy. Olga, Masha, Irina, and Andrew are different faces of the single

stalemate. Their reluctant sufferings as a school-mistress, housewife, unmarried sister, and local councillor and lover are divided specialities of the same suburban frustration. All of them together could otherwise make a larger-than-life hero of the past practices. Chekhov knew this would go against the intermediate kind of personality as expected in *Poetics*. Sophocles' average-life characters are also mirrored in Ivanov and Voynitsky. These protagonists aren't the models of heroism but replicas of exact social figures that're grown up with certain tragic flaws in their characters. Ivanov's flaw is his psychic-depression and Uncle Vanya's is coming quickly to a hot temper. These flaws have proved that their sufferings are not solely the effects of supra-characterial forces of the nature and environment but also the results of their own undoings. Yet these protagonists also become heroes because they transform from innocence to an experience with which they fight or sacrifice them against the wrong notions and practices of the society they live into. Next, Chekhov's minor characters have multiple personalities. In positive side are characters like Trofimov, Tuzenbakh, or Uncle Sorin. The first two are highly philosophic and live on the tip of a rabbit's fur. They know the terrestrial statuses, responsibilities, and lives have no meaning. So they abstain from involvements. White Natasha, Anfisha, Zinaida, Trigorin, et al are shown lost in the illusions of life. Growing up children is a very proud business for Natasha; so is managing the house-finance to Zinaida. Anfisha and Trigorin are lost in physical loves. Chekhov's tragedies also have character-types who maximize and ridicule social follies. A strict sense to tradition, Borkin and Pishchik grab money in hook or crook. Shabelsky is an extreme misanthrope; while Nina finds her youth never dying. She always boasts she's as young as a girl of 15. Marsha is too emotional for tears in love; while Helen the zenith of a beautiful but workless lady. There're a few very practical characters though. Olga

in *Three Sisters* and Varya in *The Cherry Orchard* are perfect in running house and maintaining relationships. Last but not the least, Chekhov's characters become symbols and symbols become characters, too. Firs in *The Cherry Orchard* stands for our meaningless language. In the play, the cherry orchard is always cited but never present character that represents innocent aristocracy. The chopping axe and the breaking string come frequently as symbolic characters drumming the death of aristocratic living. Chebutykin in *Three Sisters* is fixed to newspaper readings as a human's futile fixation to a job. When the soldiers play the farewell band in the play, the social security is symbolized being weakened. These agents prove that Chekhov's inventions in characterization most adroitly accept and create within the poetics of characterization practised before and after him.

Chekhov's style of dialogue and choice of language have been analyzed as sharing many features with the practices of other many playwrights of the modern era. For one thing, his dialogue fulfils the functions it should bear. It uses simple day-to-day language to clearly exchange the information about the characters speaking listening, and the absent. The dialogue is also observed of reporting off-stage actions, speculating future course of the play, or reminiscencing the past events. In one instance, Olga's opening dialogue in *Three Sisters* lets us know that their father was the army-brigade commander of the state and died before a year. For another, Chekhov's dialogue uses and questions the old proverbs in the talk as "God is in his heaven, all's right with the world." More strikingly, Chekhov's also shown people unable to communicate their dialogues due to clashing circumstances as seen between Mrs. Ranevsky and Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard.* We see this practice in the plays of Sartre before and Beckett later. And, the language Firs speaks is sometimes a nonsense that symbolizes the pointlessness of our language, too.

Every playwright has some remarkable new issues to make his plays worldwidely famous. Chekhov's tragedies in this case bring up socio-cultural subject-matters of the contemporary Russia. He's basically picked up seeking approval of inter-caste marriage, the land-worker's right of land ownership, urgency of new art forms and techniques in Russia, dissatisfaction of living in the suburbs, and inevitable upsurge of the business-class people in his plays. And, common to all is Chekhov's appeal for work and progress. He's shown the dead and stalemate atmosphere in his play so that the public readers aspire to seek an order in their societies through incessant involvement in work and responsibility-bearing as other many modern writers have done. However, Chekhov's tragedies have also been observed to be deeply advocating the contemporary philosophies of Sartre, Camus, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Hegel, etc in few. Nina's observations of the celebrities among trivial activities and interests of common human nature, for instance, recall Schopenhauer's "ordinary morality" in humans pushing to competition with and hatred to one another. Other characters like Natasha and Zinaida act for their insatiable hunger for existence as Nietzsche sees in tragedies. On the other hand, Tuzenbakh's and Trofimov's nihilistic thoughts have anticipated Beckett's theatre of the absurd later to come. Similarly, Chekhov's questioning of reality has later been put into poetics of tragedy by Pirandello and others.

Chekhov's plays have also adhered to the contemporary trends of aesthetic thoughts such as realism, naturalism, and existentialism. Mrs. Ranevsky's mask of license to over-expenditure in being the agent of aristocratic living is observed as a blind ideal of realism that ashames her at last. The naturalistic reference has been seen in the inability of Ivanov, Olga, or other protagonists to escape the sordid environment and evil social practices. They become mere patients of passive

sufferings for whom peace is probably available only in death. Next, fixed- or non-activities of characters like Dr. Astrov, Chebutykin, Tuzenbakh, or Trofimov reflect their ironical or straight awareness that any activity is meaningless on the earth. Besides, the observation has shown these tragedies within the poetics of concentric yielding circles and fourteen major propositions of tragedy proclaimed by T.R. Henn in the *Harvest of* Tragedy.

Finally, as in many plays of other writers, Chekhov's tragedies have amply used figurative words, comical spices, and motifs. The study has shown playing cards, playing melancholic music, and gunshots are some motifs that appear in almost all plays. They're identical in respectively representing the work-lazy life, the deepening tragedy, and the sacrifice of life as the last attack to the overriding old values and practices of the plays. Like Nora's door-slam, Chekhov's used sounds of a hooting owl, a burning stove, a sweeping wind, axe chopping, or a string breaking. But they symbolize loss & sadness rather than protest here. And Chekhov's comical anecdotes in the tragedies are found allegorical. At the surface level, Dr. Dorn's "a bottle of ether's exploded" (115) at Treplev's gunshot suicide may simply report his death. But in its subtle connotation, this trivializes a human's death as insignificant or meaningless as that of a chemical-bottle.

So, as by every other playwright, Chekhov's styles of representing individuals in his tragedies experiencing tragic sufferings amidst their responsibilities and hubris are observed as more subtle blending of maximum of standard styles, serious contemporary issues, and popular philosophical concepts if his period.

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