

Golding's Sea Trilogy: A Tribute to the Quintessential Self

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Abstract :

Golding published the Rites of Passage in 1980 which heralded a remarkable change in the perceptions of human life as held by him in the earlier novels. However, the publication of **The Paper Men** in 1984, reaffirmed his faith in the essential illness of man but with a mild suggestion of redemption. However after **The Paper Men**, Golding thought of giving a direction and a dry land to the ship that is left in doldrums; lolling in the Atlantic in the first novel of the Sea-trilogy, **Rites of Passage**. To bring the ship and its characters safely to the shores from the Atlantic, he published his two volumes as an afterthought. He says that he did not foresee volume two and three while writing volume one, ie, **Rites of Passage**. He published **Close Quarters** in 1987 and **Fire Down Below** in 1989 and then the sea trilogy **To the Ends of the Earth** in 1992, comprising the three novels was published.

Golding is described as a 'violent and more deeply disturbed' novelist. The reason for his dissatisfaction is his belief in human inadequacy and mankind's essential illness. Golding, because of his obsession with human guilt and sin, showed his characters as symbols to convey his ideas. He shows the heart of darkness manifesting in various forms. If it is utter lawlessness and savagery in **Lord of the Flies**, it is monumental ego in **Pincher Martin**. **The Spire** deals with religious obsessions and irrational faith created not by deep rooted faith but provoked by ego. In some novels it is the paranoia with which his protagonists suffer and in some it is utter selfishness and inhumanity.

Golding's scope is vast and stretches from innocence of the Neanderthals in **The Inheritors** to the arrogance of the 19th Century aristocrat in the Sea Trilogy comprising **Rites of Passage**, **Close Quarters** and **Fire Down Below**. He deals with various facets of life and multitudinous shades of human emotions. His characters are pattern markers. They make vain attempts to impose their own will on nature. They fail to comprehend the emergence of the inevitable pattern that asserts itself at all costs. Virginia Marie Tiger opines that Golding's view of human nature is rationally inexplicable and religious and also believed that "man's nature contains a mystery of 'darkness'". In Golding's view, the contemporary man lacks vision. He experiences mystery as malignancy but not as holiness. Man abstracts from his violence and projects it as a fear of demon which will destroy him. In Golding's fiction, according to Virginia Tiger:

"the central symbol for the spiritual dimension is
darkness and the central symbolic episode is the

nightmare world where character undergoes atavistic recordings”.

All his characters fail to recognise the divine and the inevitable pattern that emerges at the end. Preoccupied with their own sin and dark motives, they try to impose their own darkness on to nature and fail to realise the divine, always mistaking the good for the bad.

The characters of Golding enact his vision of man and darkness. His characters mistake the divine for the devil. In **Lord of the Flies**, Jack and his band, celebrate the beast and offer sacrifice. But they mistake the dead air man for the beast. They even kill Simon, mistaking him for a beast when he comes down the hill to relieve them from the dread of the beast. In **The Inheritors**, the Newman exterminates, the meek and gentle Neanderthal man mistaking him for a carnivorous savage. His innocence is mistaken for dark motives and demoniac savagery. Pincher fails to recognise the emerging pattern and rejects the apparition which comes to offer him some relief from the world of sin and trauma. He mistakes the “dark vulnerable centre that was certain of its own sufficiency” and threatens to spit on it. Sammy Mountjoy in **Free Fall**, fails to recognise the unnameable and unfathomable darkness – always different from what he believed it to be. Even in the sea-trilogy, one can see Talbot always trying to impose his feelings on others and imputing motives because of his own insufficiency in judging people. The result is that everyone on board appears as corrupt, hypocritical and foolish to Talbot. His biased and contrived outlook presents everyone, something different from their real selves.

A keen observation of the novels of Golding reveals that his characters are all disturbed beings. Their hubris and selfishness distort their perceptions and they fail to realise their mistakes till it is too late. More often than not his protagonists fail to make distinction between love and sex. For them love is a “passionate frustration”. Golding shows that love is not possible in a world of individuals as they are imprisoned by their own private and unique consciousness.

Pincher intends to possess Mary instead of winning her heart through love in **Pincher Martin**. He kills his close friend Nathaniel out of jealousy – who has pure love for Mary. Sammy Mountjoy out of his frustration wants to probe Beatrice and wants to know what it is to be Beatrice. He wants to explore her white body in the nature of pure and chaste love. He too exploits her and makes love to Beatrice forcefully, but his love ceases with the satisfaction of his lust. He is incapable of love. Oliver in **The Pyramid** exploits, Evie sexually but fails to recognise the real motives of Evie. Evie in need of love comes to Oliver, but he wants to explore her body and possess her. Wilfred Barclay, the ‘paper man’ in the novel of the same title, is also a victim of this frustration. He is capable of sex but fails to love any one from the whole ‘chest of goodies’. He admits that he is a man “Liking sex but incapable of love”. It is interesting to note that even Talbot

in **Rites of Passage** is passionate in making love to Zenobia but deserts her later out of all contempt. He has no feelings of love for her but exploits her sexually. It seems Golding's characters always mistake lust for love. There is a thin demarcation line or no line that exists in the minds of the characters of Golding between love and sex.

It is worthy of mentioning that Golding always tries to go deeper and probe the innermost recesses of human heart instead of playing on the surface. He lays bare the psyche of troubled, obsessed, hubristic men. Often his characters are obsessed with their selfish intent as they are victims of dilemma, religious obsessions and a potent force driving them to do evil. They suffer from loneliness, guilt and incapacity to love and be loved.

Further, one can note that, almost all the characters of Golding suffer from dichotomy. They are found suspended in the void, unable to choose either the physical or the spiritual world. They always fail to distinguish the good from the bad, love from sex, spirituality from the materialism. Many of his characters suffer from pride, ego selfishness and thus come into conflict with themselves. When they fail to impose their own patterns, they seem to be frustrated and dissatisfied. At times, they realise their vacillation, but fail, helplessly to choose between the good and the bad. Golding's employment of weather, balletic lanterns, and pendulum movement to drive home, the dichotomous nature of Edmund Talbot in the sea-trilogy is successful because the dichotomy persists in his character throughout the journey. This dichotomy seems to be the hallmark feature of all the protagonists of Golding.

One of the recurring themes of Golding is the conflict between the world of science and conscience, the material and the spiritual. He selects characters from these two worlds and tries to universalise the conflict between them. Simon and Jack in **Lord of the Flies**, Newman and Lok in **The Inheritors**, Pincher and Nat in **Pincher Martin**, Nickshales and Miss Pringle in **Free Fall**, and finally in the sea-trilogy, Benet and Charles Summers represent the two worlds. It is generally observed that Science has both the positive as well as the negative side to it. Besides the availability of fruits of science, it has a negative and destructive side too and Golding shows that if conscience is overpowered by the material and the scientific, man ceases to be human and that it will lead him to the catastrophe.

Usually his characters enact the drama of human guilt and fall. As the inheritors of sin and a corrupt habitat, they are filled with the "devil's brew". They create savage monsters in an 'edenic' island, they kill the weak and the gentle, they spit on the divine and defile the altars. They exploit women and for them sex is not a noble act of procreation but like the 'wastelanders' they exchange love like "handing round a bag of toffees". They attach importance not to the divine and true religion but to the canonicals and to the observance of rites, and they are victims of religious obsessions. They are haunted by ego and suffer from paranoia.

There is a general perception that Golding underplays women characters in his novels. Sometimes his novels do not contain any female characters and more often than not, they are slenderly drawn. It seems Golding is at home either in analysing the child psychology or the male psychology, but rarely, while portraying female characters. Though one may not find any evidence or reason in his novels as to why he underplayed women characters; if at all he did so, the sea-trilogy answers all the questions raised regarding his abilities in doing such a feat. Sophy, in *Darkness Visible*, is an exceptional character portrayed by Golding completely different from all his female characters. She represents the world of sin and crime. Mrs. Prettiman, in the sea-trilogy, who stands a testimony to the abilities of Golding in portraying a female character, is a lady of grace, nobility and dignity. She is excellently portrayed though her character does not hover round the novel as that of the character of Mr. Prettiman.

Though it appears that Golding was operating under some self imposed limitations as he limited himself in portraying the darker side of a human being till *Darkness Visible*, he seems to free himself from such a limitation as he unveiled the Sea Trilogy. He believed that “man produces evil as a bee produces honey” . But from his novel **Darkness Visible**, he never stopped by laying bare the heart of darkness, but he showed the illumination that can be created in that dark heart. He showed Matty, carefully planning his regeneration through penance and sacrifice, and shows a way out to the human beings from the world of sin, selfishness and depravity.

Golding can be considered a religious novelist with a vision, based on the concept of original sin. The framework of his morals is conceived in terms of traditional Christian symbolism. He probes deep down into the human psyche, to trace out the disease. But Christian view is distinguished from that of the humanist view while emphasising on not the diagnosis part but on the therapeutic side or treatment. The Christian view believes in a source of value beyond this world, and hopes for grace to help in tidying up with the struggles of life. Simon, Lok, Nathaniel, Matty and Colley are all mystics in some way in the novels of Golding. They all enact Golding’s vision of conflict between the good and the bad. Golding believes that the battle is inevitable because of human egoism, but he implies simultaneously an aspiration towards a finer and harmonious existence. Critics have attacked Golding for his incomplete vision of man and for giving a true report of man’s sinfulness but not the cure. Interestingly, it is not just a change in Talbot’s attitude that is brought out in the sea-trilogy, a sort of panacea for human suffering is unveiled through the sea trilogy. He gives a true Christian vision of man not just of sin but also of redemption. Thus the sea-trilogy can be considered as the climax of Golding’s novelistic vision.

There are Christ-like figures in almost all of his novels, if one may observe with a keen eye. Besides showing man’s sinfulness and the terrible disease of being human, Golding provided all his novels with Christ-like figures. Because of man’s essential

illness, and the 'devil's brew', man will exterminate any meek and gentle character, is what is the message that can be observed in the most of the novels. The Christ-like figures present Golding an opportunity to play contrast and distinguish the good from the bad. The Christ-like figures, which are inevitably exterminated; enact the vision of Golding of man's corrupt nature and at the same time the presence of humanity at least among a few. His protagonists themselves realise their fallen condition at the end but Golding never gave them an opportunity to make up for the loss. In **Darkness Visible** and later in the **Ends of the Earth – A Sea Trilogy**, Golding has shown his protagonists as serious to purge themselves of their follies and foibles. They are shown working out their own salvation. Golding intended to show that regeneration is possible through diligence, significantly in the sea trilogy in contrast to the earlier novels that he had penned.

In his sea trilogy, Golding seems to make his idea very emphatic that the British society is egoistic per se. The pride and the ego, not just in the individual but in the whole of the society as such, are exposed. He tries to condemn the distinctions of class and rank without mincing words.

Further it can be noted that, in almost all the novels of Golding, women characters are subjugated and exploited by male characters. Mary for Pincher is nothing more than a physical body which he wants to possess. Beatrice is found bearing the yoke of Sammy's deeds in **Free Fall**. He pretends love and in the name of love, he subjugates and exploits Beatrice. She is degenerated to the status of an animal because of Sammy in the novel. Alison's money is utilised by Jocelin to construct the spire, but he attaches no importance to her and turns down her request for a tomb in the cathedral. It seems women have no significance of any sort. Oliver, exploits, Evie sexually and she has no spiritual significance as he is pre-occupied only with her body. Evie is exploited by Oliver sexually whereas Miss Dawlish is exploited by Mr. Henry, the automobile expert, who attaches no importance to her emotions but only to her money. Barclay, the paper man, in the novel of the same title, leaves his daughter and wife to their fate and leaves home in search of sensual pleasures. They pay the price for his alcoholism and the itches of middle aged lust. Zenobia Brocklebank in **Rites of Passage** is subjugated by the aristocratic Talbot, whose intention is only to satisfy his lust. He deserts her and looks down upon Zenobia with contempt after the brief sexual encounter.

Interestingly, in the sea-trilogy, Mr. Prettiman, becomes a mouth-piece of Golding; advocating the cause of the women. Prettiman demands a proper place for women, but at the same time believes that women are capable of taking care of themselves. He criticises the hypocrisy and double standards adopted by men of Talbot's class towards women in no uncertain terms.

Though Golding disagrees with the label attached to him as a pessimist, it can be observed that his novels are devoid of humour and irony and any kind of optimism for human regeneration. Humans are portrayed as incapable of love, affection, tenderness and the fine sense of living a good life. Even if one finds humour in any of the novels, it may be noted that it is mostly bitter or sarcastic. Perhaps, Golding's vision of men and his serious concern for showing man caught up in the grip of sin and evil never seem to accommodate any humour and irony as he portrays his characters and their 'essential illness'.

In his foreword to the sea-trilogy, Golding says that his "optimism gained an upper hand" (perhaps the reason for composing the sea trilogy), so it is his attempt, to show life less and less as a 'hopeless affair', that made sea trilogy an optimistic work. His conception seems to change from **Darkness Visible**, and he believed that tragedy and comedy are inextricably intertwined in life. Golding who showed "man led by pride, guilt and fear into murder, sadism and disaster" shows Talbot purging himself, whereas Prettiman reforms the criminals, and Mrs. Prettiman renders help which is a drastic change as can be noted in the sea trilogy in comparison to the earlier novels. Talbot realises the necessity of love and service in life. Golding shows in his sea trilogy the amount of happiness that man is capable of through love, service and sacrifice. Golding, who showed evil in man, and man under the grips of guilt believed later that human beings are the sparks of the Absolute. They are "the fire down below-matching the fire up there – out there!". Golding cried for "the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart" in almost all of his novels till **Darkness Visible** and even later in **The Paper Men**. In **Lord of the Flies** he has portrayed the destructive potentiality of human beings and their capability in producing sin. The holocaust, the depravity, the loss of values and the experiences of his protagonists all form the paradigm of human situation is essentially portrayed in most of his novels except the sea trilogy. He seems to believe that the human being is

“ a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked cover of parchment...”

But in **Darkness Visible** and later in the sea-trilogy he shows that, provoked by love and sacrifice, man can himself be a spark of the divine. He sings in praise of 'Scintillans Dei'.

It can be noted with remarkable ease that Talbot's human and spiritual aspects are in doldrums in the novel **Rites of Passage**. With the rites of passage that ensue Coley's death, Talbot seems to suffer his own rites of passage. He is able to see the 'null-point' where he stands, as he starts looking at people from *close quarters*. With the help of the egalitarian philosopher, Mr. Prettiman he is able to see the *fire down below*. The moment he realises the 'null-point', he tries to turn himself 'end for end'. At the end, he is able to appreciate the human life, selfless service and the divinity within man trying to

match it with the “fire up there”. Towards the end, he is able to realise the essence of Prettiman’s philosophy, who believes that human beings need no priests, but they are all priests according to him. Prettiman advocates the idea that human beings are the sparks of the divine. Talbot is made to realise through his contact with Summers. Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman and others, that love and service matter a lot in the life of human beings rather than the distinction of class and rank.

Sea trilogy is a sort of panacea for human suffering and human guilt as it throws a way out to illuminate the heart of darkness. Talbot’s visit to India, symbolises the culmination of his regeneration. Through his visit to India- the land of the Buddha and the land of nirvana, that makes his journey ‘to the ends of the earth’ –complete.

As already discussed in the earlier pages, the titles of Golding’s novels are apt and symbolic. **Rites of passage** symbolises the passage of Colley into the other world – a world which is free from rank and class. It also signifies his passage into the world of sin, lust and temptation. By Colley’s *rites of passage*, Talbot too suffers his rites of passage. **Rites of Passage** allegorically speaking, refers to the passage of Edmund Talbot into the world of aristocracy, class and rank, promoted by his godfather. It symbolises his social ascendancy. His passage to the other side of the earth, is in pursuit of power and pelf. But Colley’s rites of passage, paves the way for Talbot’s passage into the world of humanity, pain and suffering. He is full of pride and is careless to the suffering of others, but Colley’s passage into the other world gives a glimpse to Talbot of human suffering, the dichotomy in man, the religious obsessions and what a man can do to others out of negligence. His rites of passage leaves him in surprise and makes him crazy, as he takes a peep into the world of Colley, to be aware of Colley’s humanity, friendliness, innocence and his weakness.

The title of the second journal- otherwise the novel of Golding, **Close Quarters** is also very much appropriate and symbolic. As Lord Talbot, he tries to keep himself away from the people as per his account in the first journal, as his vision of almost all the characters on board, is contrived and biased. His assessment of every individual is not realistic and is not supported by any evidence or his own personal experiences. He fails to reach out for help when Colley was in need of it. However, as his attitude and the vision of the people is proved, biased and contrived when he comes across Colley’s journal, he is forced to suffer his own rites of passage.

Colley’s ability to be full of warmth and affection towards all the characters is awe-inspiring for Talbot. Though, Colley as per his journal, is contemptible of Captain Anderson, Deverel and Cumbershum, he prepares himself to forgive them even after the ‘badger bag’ episode (an incident in which Colley becomes the butt of fun and frolic, ill-treated and played with as a toy of badger bag when he was drunk and goes to the deck to forgive the sinners); as a true Christian. Talbot’s hypocrisy and biased outlook become clear to him when he exposes himself to Colley’s views. His sense of guilt and an

unknown feeling roused by Colley's death rites, make Talbot come close to the people to understand them properly. His examination of the people and their attitudes from close quarters does not drive him crazy, as it did in **Rites of Passage**, and does not appear "monstrous" anymore. As he sums up his own experience of people and the so called vision from 'too close' in **Rites of Passage**, which is not realistic but is influenced by his own pride and ego. His observations from close quarters gives him an idea of mobility, humanity, love and sacrifice that a man is capable of. The so called white line, which separates the ordinary people from the elite, appears as a mere physical line. An ordinary lieutenant appears as a great friend and a naval hero. His close observations reveal that Deverel is not a worthy friend and that Prettiman was not a fool, as was supposed by him. His observations from *Close Quarters* give him a realistic picture of life, human attitude, guilt, weakness, suffering, love and sacrifice. Thus the title **Close Quarters** signifies, Talbot's coming too close to people, to understand them, as part of his attempts to purge himself and understand life as such from *close quarters*.

The title of the last novel in the sea-trilogy is mystical and symbolises the changed attitude of Golding towards human life and world. The title **Fire Down Below**, symbolises the ideology and concept of Mr. Prettiman. It signifies the human life and the world below, which can be an Eldorado if purified by the fire love. According to him human beings are not corrupt, but just need refinement and correction which can qualify them for benediction. His conception of human life is divine. According to him, the fire of love makes man divine, but it needs to be sparked off. Man is the 'spark' of the 'Absolute' according to Mr. Prettiman.

The title also signifies the fire of passion in Talbot to purge himself of all follies and foibles. Talbot's contrived and biased attitude towards life changes, because of the love that is extended to him by different characters. He is sensitized to human suffering and love and decides to dedicate himself to the service of the "sparks of the absolute". The earlier perception of the people of Rotten Borough as criminals and rascals in the begging of his journal, undergoes a sea change as he decides to proceed to Rotten Borough to serve them as his concept of human beings is completely changed.

He buys a lantern from Philips, intending to keep it as a memento of the voyage. Metaphorically it implies his intention to have light and wisdom by his side. The fire, put down below by Benet is sparked off in which Summers is consumed like Matty in **Darkness Visible**. Summers attains salvation through the fire of consummation. His sacrifice, seems to qualify him to reach the 'Absolute'. He being the 'spark of the absolute' seems to merge with the absolute as per Talbot. By his fire of love, Christian beliefs, love and penance, he attains salvation. According to Mr. Prettiman human beings are 'a fire down below-sparks of the absolute-matching the fire up there – out there!" Thus the title is symbolic and at once apt. It signifies all conceptions of the

physical and the spiritual worlds. It shows the evolution of Talbot's mind in the light of the characters like Summers and the Prettimans.

Golding's novels have both philosophic overtones and undertones. He takes the help of allegories, fables and parables to portray the deep depths of human consciousness. He is not just an excellent story teller but a moralist and a religious writer. His central theme is not just relationship of man to man but the relationship of individual to nature and to the God. He is called variously as a nihilist, existentialist, moralist, pessimist and a serious writer with distorted human vision. But is not untrue that Golding was a serious writer with a purpose. He denies all classifications as he is not just a psychologist, a religious writer, an analyst and an existentialist but a writer always on the move to probe the psyche of man. His vision is universal. His vision of man is not just pessimistic; as he offers solutions to illuminate the dark consciousness of man. He seems to believe in the fire of love which can make the world, a paradise on Earth.

Golding has his own vision with which he looks at things. The power of innate evil in man seems to be the central theme of almost all his novels. Undoubtedly, to some readers, Golding will appear as a deeply pessimistic writer. Perhaps the influence of the two world wars and his own childhood might have moulded his perceptions the way he nurtured them.

“But the relentless harping on the power of evil and, the apparent hopelessness of the human situation create an effect which is ultimately depressing and defeatist” , according to Boris Ford. But Golding never denied the possibility of redemption. About his vision and treatment of human life in his character, Golding states:

“I see, or I bring myself to see, a certain set of circumstances in a particular way. If it is the way everybody else sees them, then there is no point in writing a book”.

Particularly the war seems to have shattered the liberal and optimistic image of man in Golding. His novels move at the level of phenomena; they relate both to the physical and the spiritual and deal with their own forms of experience. His novels strike the readers, as strictly contemporary, as they are rooted in the anxiety and anguish of the post-war period. The novels appear as the self-contained wholes, more wider in sweep and universalising the experiences with cosmic meanings. Walter Allen points out:

“ (Golding) is showing us stripped man, man naked of all the sanctions of custom and civilisation, man as he is alone and in his essence, or at any rate, as he can be conceived to be in such a condition”

It can be observed that the sudden shifts are brought in by Golding in almost all his novels, particularly at the end. He changes the view point, all of a sudden and startles his readers immensely. The abrupt ending of his novels or the sudden shifts at the end of his novels, cannot be considered as a discredit to Golding, as it is not forceful or merely ornamental. One may notice that these are all part of his design and Golding exploited such technique to impose his perceptions. The reader would rather tend to suspend his or her sense of disbelief because of Golding's close approximation to the real personalities in characterisation and with deep involvement with the perception of the principal character's perceptions, his or how own judgement of what is happening would be distant. Either the innocent and child experiences of Ralph and his friends in **Lord of the Flies**, or the sub-human, inarticulate Neanderthal man in **The Inheritors**, Golding achieves this close approximation which is impossible to imitate. The readers are at once placed in the pre-historic time frame and are given a lively picture of the innocent Neanderthal man. In the sea-trilogy, the nautical idiom, and the seaman's rig along with the sea ceremonies, takes the reader at once to the ancient ship locale. The abrupt shift in the point of view at the end makes the reader to reinterpret the happenings in the novel as Golding desires. Strangely in the sea-trilogy the point of view is changed gradually, but it is the changed point of view of one and the same character during the course of the journey.

Golding's novels seem to abound in complex imagery and symbols, that they baffle the readers at times. He is not just careful but subtle in the choice of his dictions. His words are not mere carriers of his expression but are rich and evocative. More often than not his worlds have picture images like that of Neanderthal's language. His words, it seems, have visual rather than auditory effect. In **Lord of the Flies**, and particularly in **The Inheritors**, the innocent experiences of children and the inarticulate Neanderthal language could be described only through such picture images. Even Colley and Talbot use such picture words to express their feelings in the face of emotional upheaval and awe. Talbot describes the status of man as: "we hang from it by our feet!" , whereas Colley in **Rites of Passage** describes their status as "Suspended between the land below the waters and the sky like a nut on a branch". The words are visual than auditory. About the novels of Golding, Medcalf states:

"Elusive effects of words became subsidiary to vivid, dynamic, and detailed imagination. This does not apply only to sound. Golding's words tend not to have meanings of the incantatory connotation and association, as they would have to do it he were to be a poet"

He draws his imagery in such a fashion that his description becomes graphic and more often than not, poetic. His complexity and realism blended with fable and myth gets his prose a poetic compression.

His novels are realistic novels operating in the same essential terms, and contain a conception of the relation between individuals and society, ordinarily a virtuous individual or small personal group, against a vile society. David Lodge points out that the action, normally:

“... is a release of tensions in the personal – social complex, but I say release, and not working-out, because ordinarily the device subtly alters the tensions, places them in a pre-selected light, so that it is not so much that they are explored but indulged. The experience of isolation, of alienation, and of self-exile is an important part of contemporary structure of feeling.”

It seems Golding deliberately limits himself to characters, that try to show human nature in its most basic and primitive form as in a realistic novel.

Golding's symbols and imagery are not mere ornaments but they form part and parcel of his design. His symbols try to reinterpret his perceptions. Particularly the sea-trilogy is replete with rich and evocative symbols of the sea, sky, the sun and the moon, dragrope, telescope, weed, sea-anchor, lanterns and weather. At times his reader is baffled by such medley of symbols. David Nokes observes:

“As a story-teller his touch never falters. His attention to details of idiom and setting show a reverence for his craft that would do credit to a master-shipwright. It is in the dark undertow of his metaphors and in the literary ostentation of his allusions that a feeling of strain and contrivance appears. As he steers us through the calms and storms, we are never quite sure whether we are in the safe hands of a master-mariner or under the dangerous spell of an Old Man of the Sea.”

But as a great Master Mariner, Golding has succeeded in getting the ship and his characters out of danger and even the readers too, of course through high tides and under currents. His sea imagery is not a single image but represents the depths of human consciousness. Sea represents the deeply disturbed consciousness of both Colley and Talbot. The sea trilogy also proves that Golding is capable of portraying intellectuals, gracious and intelligent personalities as against cut-throats and the incorrigible. He has

portrayed the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman with rare precision and firm conviction. But is true that Golding has failed in making the emotional responses of Mr. Talbot more serious. Talbot is often a romantic fool than a serious lover. Through the character of Mrs. Prettiman, Golding shows that his pen is capable of sketching a dignified and gracious female personality.

Golding has undoubtedly come to be regarded as one the most complex and serious writers of this century. He has his own peculiar style and place in the history of English literature. Through his often extreme conceptions and experiments in diction and style, he has set his own 'pattern'. Medcalf points out:

“...his (Golding’s) books relate primarily to themselves. The intransigence, the concern for truth and fitting together of image and image into patterns of great constancy, the reduction of concept to experience, and the re-creation of language make something as new in English literature as there has ever been. Once might well hope that he will be the father of a recovered freshness in the English language and its literature, and of something like his own transigence in our approach to religion and human nature.”

With all the limitations, it may be noted that Golding is a serious writer with a mission to show the darkness of human heart, and the possibility of illuminating the dark consciousness of human being. Golding believed that man is an incomplete being deprived of his natural development as shown in his most of the novels. According to him the spiritual side is missing in man’s character and thus he is materialistic and inhuman. But the sea-trilogy shows his conception of man’s essential illness and original sin but also believed in original virtue. To support this opinion, it is too tempting to cite Frank Kermode and end this paper by quoting him who opines that:

“Golding believes in human guilt and the human sense of paradise lost; he also believed in divine mercy”

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