



ANTONY MYTH THE MYTH OF SELF-DENOUNCEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Antony's character is built in the play involving the historical events and the incidents. Those events are interpreted in the play that deals with the Roman history. Antony's character becomes a myth because Shakespeare has been creating the character of Antony not only as the representative of history but also as the representative of certain individual and political values. He becomes not a person but an archetype of honour and love. This paper intends to clear 'What is historical is turned into a historical'. Myth can be established when some of the historical events repeatedly occur. History teaches the new philosophy of life showing where in man had committed errors in the past.

KEYWORDS: Antony's character , Roman history , philosophy of life.

INTRODUCTION:

Shakespeare creates a new world in his plays. He is a Utopian on one hand and Machiavellian on the other. He recreates the history of England from the age of Henry I to the age of Henry VIII in his history plays. One general intention of Shakespeare in his history plays is to focus on the weaknesses of the rulers and to show how these weaknesses become the causes for the great turbulence in the kingdom. England was gradually taking the geographical shape of a nation since 1066 when England became a place inviting the Norman Conquest. William the conqueror came along with his train along with the people from Normandy, a Province in France. The Normans had to fight and conciliate with the natives and with the Saxons. There was the racial unification after three hundred years announcing a new creed in which there was only Englishness. French Language was used in the churches and the French language gave way to England an attitude to think and act. The literature had come much in Latin. English was not considered to be an appropriate language for documentation and was used in oral communication. Shakespeare has been citing the development of the language along with the development of English culture. During the renaissance, the Prince of Machiavelli was translated into English. It provided the guide lines for the political administration suggesting some ways 'to war and to peace'. England had met so many wars both the external and the internal. It had fought the 100year war, the war of roses for 37 years where the internal wars and the revolutions which had kept the whole nation in unrest for centuries together. One had to adapt the political values suggested in 'the Prince' for establishing order and peace in the nation. Shakespeare created the character of Prince Hal in his two plays. King Henry IV part I and part II. He was jovial as a prince. He was able to see the world through his own eyes. He did not depend on the historical references but depended only on his own experiences realizing the causes for the onslaught of other cultures both on human nature and in the state. In King Henry V, Prince Hal becomes the king. Among all the kings that Shakespeare has

dramatized King Henry V is the ideal king presenting him in the various political values recommended in the book 'The Prince'. In fact, Henry V for the first time attempted to bring an end to the wars to snub the civil wrangles and to make the people to realize that they belong to one nation and to Christianity. Shakespeare makes King Henry V, as the ruler who had taken both politics and religion embraced with each other. He tried educating the people about the episodes from the Bible and to sing the prayer songs in addition to their main job of tending the sheep. He did not want his people to be sheep like but to be individualistic. Shakespeare begins propagating the ideal characters of King Henry V enacting them and showing them in some other characters especially the character of Octavius Caesar.

He introduces Octavius in the play "The tragedy of Julius Caesar" who is then a young man of sixteen years who can fight even with the great leader like Brutus or Cassius. He is recuperated in another tragedy on Roman history "Antony and Cleopatra". Shakespeare brings out the parallel between Octavius Caesar and Antony in the play. He focuses on the character of Antony as the soldier of honour, becoming a man of dishonor. A person who earned by himself the noble qualities of being an honorable soldier loses his reputation and dies a mean death at the end. Cleopatra becomes a tool to destroy a person with his passionate love for a woman and a tool that drives him to a pitiless end.

Antony's character is built in the play involving the historical events and the incidents. Those events are interpreted in the play that deals with the Roman history. Antony's character becomes a myth because Shakespeare has been creating the character of Antony not only as the representative of history but also as the representative of certain individual and political values. He becomes not a person but an archetype of honour and love. What is historical is turned into – a historical. Myth can be established when some of the historical events repeatedly occur. History teaches the new philosophy of life showing where in man had committed errors in the past. It does not direct but only represent the events and the reader is at his discretion to interpret and generate the new thoughts. The negligence of man is shown as one of the weaknesses but the same character is shown repeatedly. The over confidence of Caesar can make him to ignore the cautions for which he has to pay a great penalty. Brutus fails to learn a lesson out of this experience. The same mistake is committed by Antony who does not accept the advices of his own people. For instance, his companions advised him not to wage war by the sea because Antony's troop was weak and the decks of his ships were rotten. He does not listen to them. He takes his own adamant decision ignoring the advices and ultimately loses his battle to the extent of running away from the battle field asking his soldiers to surrender to Caesar. Antony has not learnt a lesson from the previous incidents. In this way history has been showing some of these events which are common and happened to show the common weakness. Such of these events become archetypal in literature. This can be the myths in the literary criticism. Antony in this way becomes a myth just as in Julius Caesar, Brutus has become a myth.

Shakespeare does not ignore the renaissance spirit in any of his plays. It is introduced in its variety through the different dramatic personae. Therefore it is said that Shakespeare enacts the renaissance on the stage making history to speak English language as of the language of renaissance. In the hands of Shakespeare English language has been taking a new shape. It becomes a modern way for expressing modernity in its entity. His play Antony and Cleopatra is not an exception. Though the story is the Roman, they speak English which is translated into the spirit of mankind.

Myth is a kind of thought based on some of the elements that come between perceptions and concepts. Perception is the act of knowing the external world and Conception is formulating the intrinsic system with the thoughts and the values. It is transformed from one generation to other, from one creed to another. Therefore, myth is traditionally a plot which can be transmitted to the various boundaries, ideology. In this regard myth becomes a closer resemblance to ideology. In any play there is a plot consisting of the events and the characters. Each event is linked with another. It has an intrinsic structure also which is shown not only in action but also in the language. In Antony and Cleopatra there is a social value and a social status but within the plot something is shown which is an internal reality. In Shakespeare, English language is used as a proper medium of narrating the social events and suggesting the internal reality. In the description of human behavior, Shakespeare makes use of subtle language with the subtle images. In the hands of Shakespeare, Antony myth is constructed not only on

what the people have believed and created but on the fabric of every day modern life. In the book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes, explains that the main function of myth is to explain a particular process in which historically determined circumstances are presented as natural ones. In his opinion, myth uncovers the abuse hidden in the automation and the habitualization. In fact, myth performs a naturalizing function which is similar to de-familiarization. The social myth is the form of de-familiarization of the historical. A historical fact in this process becomes either a thought or a speech. Shakespeare's history plays do not transform the object of the historical message but he transforms a peculiar way in which the historical utterance is made. Hence, the historical is de-politicized when it is expressed in a language. Shakespeare is a psychologist. He focuses on the manner of revealing the historical object not only as a message but as a thought. In this way, the historical evidences around the life of Antony just as they are brought into the play Antony and Cleopatra help in bringing myth of Antony. The historical circumstances are exploded in the play in order to focus on the human behavior in general which can clearly be seen in the conversation going on among the tribunes of Rome – Antony, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. Before the arrival of Antony, Caesar comes to know all about Antony's disregard to his duty as the leader of a state. But he believes in the strength of Antony which is not to be ignored. Rome is now preparing for a war against the son of Pompey who is about to invade in order to regain the power of his father. All the three must come together in order to meet the large army forgetting the differences. As a friend, Lepidus has been asking both Caesar and Antony not to debate on the trivial differences but to come to the good terms to safeguard the state. Caesar agrees, though he has the discontentment, on the behavior of Antony's wife and brother because they have invaded Caesar for a petty cause.

Shakespeare uses the technique of the reminiscence in order to bring an analogy between the two historical periods and makes use of the retreat as a myth. The myth criticism borrows these myths from the historical reminiscence and keeps it in the aesthetic structure. Shakespeare provides the good example in the creation of the myth and in borrowing the myth from history. The Elizabethan literature takes its artistic shape with the help of the Greek art and literature. Greek literature is filled with the myths. These myths represent the reality. Myth in this connection is a way of seeing the reality again. In the modern theories of structuralism, myth is viewed as a transformation of history into a sort of common sense. Roland Barthes, discusses the way the historical event is transformed into a common sense and a common speech. The Roman history which focuses on Antony and Octavius Caesar is transformed into a common thought by Shakespeare in the play Antony and Cleopatra. In fact, Shakespeare is the engineer who makes use of the tools and materials from the history for the specific purposes.

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