Chapter - IV

Exile from the World

FUGITIVE
Plays that deal with purely domestic problems of a universal and permanent significance without introducing any immediate social questions, are very few. **Joy, A Family Man**, and **The Fugitive** could be included in this group. The Fugitive is the tragic story of a beautiful woman who leaves her husband because she doesn’t love him anymore, and is driven to desperate suicide. Social and religious issues are involved in this family breakdown.

The play, **The Fugitive** opens in the flat of Mr. George Dedmond. The man–servant Paynter is seen arranging two tables for bridge. Burney, the maid enters the room. Paynter looks up at her and asks where Mrs. Clare has gone. Burney tells that she is out for a walk. Paynter says that she will run off as she doesn’t like to stay with Mr. George Dedmond. Paynter asks Burney about Clare Dedmond’s family background. Burney tells him about Clare’s family. Just then George Dedmond enters from the hall.

George Dedmond is in evening dress, opera hat and overcoat. His face is broad, glossily shaved, his eyes are clear, small and blue–grey, have little speculation. His hair is well brushed. He gives his coat and had to Paynter and tells him to put his black waist coat always. Paynter says that he will do it and asks his permission and leaves. George calls his wife Clare.
but he doesn't get any answer. He asks him where Clare has gone. Paynter replies that his wife has gone out for a walk and she did not dress formally.

George asks Paynter when his parents would arrive to play bridge. Paynter replies that they will be coming at half-past nine. George tells Paynter to call Burney. Burney, the maid enters the room. George asks her where Mrs. Clare has gone and what she told before she went out. Burney replies that she has gone out for a walk as it is a pleasant evening. Burney leaves the room.

Paynter coming in from the hall, announces that General Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond have arrived. Sir Charles is an upright, well-groomed, grey moustached, red faced man of sixty seven. Lady Dedmond has a firm, thin face, full of capability and decision, not without kindliness. She is fifty five years old. She kisses her son and asks about Clare. George shows his anger on Clare and tells his parents and blames Mr. Malise for his wife's misconduct.

Paynter reappearing announces that Captain Huntigndom had arrived. He is a tall, fair soldier of thirty. He is informed of Clare's absence. Just then Mr. Malise enters. Almost immediately Clare also comes in. There is some frigid conversation before
Clare comes in. They talk about Mr. Malise and Clares affairs, their relationship. As soon as Clare comes in, everybody retire to another room to play bridge leaving Malise and Clare alone. Clare says Malise that she doesn't want to stay with George and she wishes to come out of the house. Malise supports her decision saying that there is a whole world outside to spread her wings.

Clare tells Malise that her father is a saint who is getting old and has a sister engaged and three sisters to whom she should set a good example. She says that she has no money and she wants to earn on her own. Malise approves her decision. Malise admires her and asks her to play some music. Clare goes towards Piano and plays a song “I am glad not to be ugly”. Just then Mr. and Mrs. Fullarton arrive. Malise ask Clare who they are. Clare replies that Mrs. Fullarton is her old close friend. Mrs. Fullarton is rather tall woman, with dark hair and a quick eye. Her husband was naval person who retired from the sea, but not from susceptibility.

Mrs. Fullarton greets Clare and asks about Dedmonds. Clare tells her that they are playing bridge in the dinning room. Mrs. Fullarton says that they can't stay for the bridge, they have come there just to see Clare for a minute.
Malise says goodnight and leaves. Mrs. Fullarton asks Clare how the things are going on. Clare just moves her shoulders. Mrs. Fullarton asks Clare if she is sleeping separately in separate bedroom. Clare replies that she is not doing so and she doesn't want to torture him. Mrs. Fullarton says that there are opportunities for a married woman to live independently. Mrs. Clare Dedmond asks her if she can keep her at home. But Mrs. Fullarton says that she can't keep her at home for the fear that she would be a temptation to her husband. Mrs. Fullarton tells Clare to think wisely and not to take any step in her desperate situation. Clare doesn't listen to her words. She says that she cannot anymore adjust herself and can't live with her husband. She takes a flower from her dress and suddenly tears it to bits. It is the only sign of emotion she gives. Mrs. Fullarton tells Clare to go with her brother to India for certain period. Clare replies that Reggie can't help her on his income. Clare's friend tells her to take the help of Mr. Malise. Just then Mr. Fullarton asks Clare to sing a song "If I might be the falling bee and kiss thee all the day". Mrs. Fullarton and Mr. Fullarton leave the house. But before she leaves the house Mrs. Fullarton warns Clare against any hasty move, but she lends her a woman's moral support.

Clare's brother Reginald comes to her and says that she should change her present behaviour. He tells her that she
cannot return to her father’s house because he is a clergyman with three other unmarried daughters to provide for, and he too can’t help her on his income. He advises her to stay there itself. Clare doesn’t listen to Reggie’s words. She begins to argue. Huntington tries to convince her but she doesn’t. He tells her not to get troubles and not make the problem complicated. He feels vexed, Paynter follows him. Paynter asks Clare if she wants anything. Clare says no and Paynter takes her leave. George angrily speaks to Clare. He scolds her for going out and not caring his own people. He asks her why she is letting him down and why she gives much importance to Malise than her own people.

Clare feels sorry, but warns him that it will happen again so long as he will not set her free. George refuses to give divorce. Clare replies that she can’t satisfy him and she pleads him to give her a notice. In their five years of marriage life she had suffering. George tells her that he will not give any divorce. He doesn’t want to lose his respect and honour in the society by giving divorce to her. He scolds Malise for putting all this into Clare’s mind. He doesn’t like Malise looks, his infernal satiric way, his way of dressing. He asks Clare if Malise is in love with her. Clare tells him to ask that question to Malise himself. George
angrily says that he doesn't believe in the guide, philosopher and friend business.

Clare tells her husband that she wants to go away and earn her living. She is very serious in this matter and tells him to be happy with another woman. Clare leaves the house.

Malise is seen in his sitting room. He is writing surrounded by books and papers. Mrs. Miller, his house-keeper comes in and says that she had seen a detective on the stairs. Malise asks her how is he like. Mrs. Miller replies that he is just like the men seen on the front page of daily papers. He is nasty, smooth looking fellow with Billycock hat on his head. Malise doesn't take the matter seriously and goes into the inner room. Just then Clare comes and asks for Malise. Mrs. Miller says that he is in the room and asks her name. She tells her to sit down and wait. Malise comes and asks her if he can do anything to her. Clare asks him for his advice. She says that she had left the house and went to her father's house. She saw the condition in the house and says that she did not like being there. She doesn't want to be a burden to her living. She wants to live independently. She says that she has a thought of doing nursing. But she can't take the pain. She feels helpless, hopeless as she has no money. As Malise and Clare are discussing about Clare's
future, Mrs. Miller comes and tells them that Sir Charles, Lady Dedmond and Mr. Robert Twisden who was spying them, (George’s solicitor) have come.

Mr. Twisden is clean shaved, shrewd looking man. He is George’s lawyer. He asks Malise if they can talk to Clare privately. Malise passes into inner room and shuts the door. Twisden tells Clare that her disappearance has given her husband great anxiety. He tries to persuade Clare to return to George. He tells her that she doesn’t have any means to live independently. If she once cuts her relationship with George, she is on a road to nowhere. He tells Clare to return to George as there are wolves outside. Clare doesn’t listen his words and says that she has come to Malise house just to take advice.

Twisden goes to the outer door, Clare tells him not to follow her when she leaves the house. Lady Dedmond says that George is outside. Clare refuses to see him. On Twisden’s departure, Sir Charles and Lady Dedmond make a further plea, Clare is resolute, and Sir Charles, recognising this, is impressed by his daughter-in-law’s sincerity and passion inspite of himself. This is the moment for George, himself to come up, but all he can offer by way of persuasion, is a call to Clare to do her duty. He and Mr. Malise almost come to blows and George
leaves, with a threat to ruin Mr. Malise financially. Clare hopes that Malise will take her in, that they will fall in love, but both know that they do not love each other and that therefore they must not live a lie together, for it from a lie that Clare has escaped. Clare leaves then to face the world alone.

After three months Malise is sitting in his room doing his work. Haywood, a tobacconist comes to him with a bill. Just then a boy comes and asks Malise to give his copy for the periodical 'The Watchfire' (A periodical for which Malise writes) Malise tells him to wait. Malise tells Haywood to read his book. Haywood refuses and replies that he has got his wife at home. Malise asks both of them to read. But he says no. He takes his leave and goes out. The boy again advances into the doorway. Malise goes to the table and takes some sheets of M.S from an old portfolio. Again the door is opened, Haywood reappears. Malise gives him books and give him money to pay the bill. There is a knock on the door. Reginald Huntington appears. He introduces himself and informs Malise that Clare has been found selling gloves in a department store. She escaped from him and may call Malise. Reggie is desperate for news of his sister. He tells him that having lost job, Clare might come to him again for advice. If she does, it would be really generous for him if he
would put her father in touch with her. He gives him the address.

Malise replies that he would go according to Clare's ideas. She has got her own ideas and he would support her. Huntingdon takes his leave. Again the boy reappears. Malise takes the MS sheets, places them in an envelope and hands them to the boy. As the boy goes out, Clare comes in. she says that she has had a hard time. She can't work anymore. It's a curse to be a lady when she has to earn her living. She has been selling thing's like the shop girls. She is vexed, disgusted with her job. She says that she can't take trouble anymore. Her excitement dies away. Malise suggests her to do type writing for him. she accepts it. She tells him that she has to look for a new room for her safety. She has kept her luggage in the cloak room at Charing Cross station and tells him that she has to go.

Malise asks her to stay in his house. Clare accepts it. Malise takes the luggage ticket and gives it to Mrs. Miller and tells her to bring the luggage.

Clare stays there for three months, typing manuscripts and she is paid for it. Clare and Malise discuss about the income they get and also about the divorce of Clare with George. Malise
is in need of money. He goes out to the "Watchfire". He is in distress.

Mrs. Miller comes to Clare bringing a small bottle with a red label. Clare takes the bottle, smells it and tastes it from her finger. Mrs. Miller tells Clare that Malise is taking it to get sleep. Mrs. Miller resents her being there, and tells her that Mr. Malise will lose his commission to write for 'The Watchfire' if the divorce goes ahead, because its owners have strict views on the subject. Clare gives Miller a pendant and a note in which the address is written. She tells her to give the pendant to that address and get her thirty pounds. Mrs. Miller goes out. Later Mr. Twisden arrives with Mrs. Fullarton. Mrs. Fullarton pleads Clare to go back home. But she bluntly refuses. Mr. Twisden informs Clare that George has resolved to withdraw the divorce suit, and to settle an annual allowance on her if she will leave Malise, if not, he will claim damages from him to his last penny.

Clare refuses to take money from George. When Twisden and Mrs. Fullarton leave the house, Mr. Malise enters the house. He is upset, depressed, distress. He again goes out. Clare, recognising what ill fortune she is bringing down on Malise's head, arranges with Mrs. Miller to leave the house.
Six months later on a Derby Day at Epsom, Clare is seen in a fashionable restaurant. A supper party can be heard singing, hunting songs. A French waiter Arnaud comes and goes. Clare is very pale and is without make up. She is wearing a well cut black dress and cloak. She sits at the table she orders nothing. The waiter supplies her with a glass of water and flowers.

A young man seems to be a gentleman catches her sight and joins her. He speaks about the racing fascinated by her. He understands the desperate position of Clare. He offers to lend her money but she doesn’t accept it. She asks only a glass of wine. Two gentlemen in the background are observing Clare.

The young man proposes that they should leave and go for a drive. He leaves the table to pay the bill. The two gentlemen approach her. One is Darker Person and the other is Blond one. Dark one challenges the other to propose a dinner date to Clare. Blond one issues the invitation and takes her silence to mean consent. Clare as if realising that she has nothing to hope for in a world of such men takes a small phial of a powerful sleeping draught from her cloak. It belonged to Malise. Mrs. Miller had shown it to Clare as evidence of the depth of his problems. Clare adds the draught to the wine and drinks it off, smiling radiant in death—a lady to the last.
Arnaud comes to the table and sees her dead. He sees the little bottle and smells it. Arnaud informs the manager that the lady is dead. They ask the young man if she is his friend. He says that he doesn’t know anything about her. Thus the play ends with the tragic death of Clare.

This play deals with the problem of unhappy marriages. Clare hates her husband. If she gives her love to another man, she has to lose her home and face humiliation of divorce proceedings. Driven by circumstances she concludes that a dose of poison is her only refuge.

The Fugitive is a frank, analytical exposition of the problems of women who find themselves in very tragic situations, torn between the ideals of liberty, the sense of marital obligation and the inhuman laws of society. It illustrates what Shaw remarked about the Woman question "Woman has two enemies to deal with, the old – fashioned one who wants to keep the door locked, and the new – fashioned who wants to thrust her into the street before she is ready to go." ¹.

Clare manages to fight with the former, but fails in her attempts to overcome the latter difficulty. Cut off from the old world, not yet adjusted to the new, it results in maladjustment with the environment which consequently brings about a morbid
tragedy. Clare confides in her friend “I suppose there are lots of women who feel as I do, and go on with it; only, you see, I happen to have something in me that comes to an end. Can’t endure beyond a certain time, ever.”

There is a close parallelism between Clare’s case and that of Irene in *The man of Property*, the first of *the Forsyte Saga* trilogy. In both cases, lack of mental harmony leads to strong physical repulsion.

`The Fugitive` play is similar to Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, pursuing the steps of Nora after she left her husband. It is certain that Nora in the same circumstances would certainly meet with disaster similar to that of Clare. The social conditions being what they are, such woman can only take negative steps; cutting themselves off from all that is familiar. So long as there is no positive refuge there is no alternative but to fall victims to the antagonistic forces contriving their downfall.

Galsworthy’s ideals of sexual morality could be applied to married couples as well. Marriage vows dictated to and recited by the couple in the church retain their sanity only so long as there is mutual love. A complete break is the only possible outlet when love fails and repulsion sets in as in the cases of the Dedmond, the Forsytes, the Noels, the Dallisons and a number of other
couples who frequent Galsworthy's plays and novels. But he realizes the other side of the picture also illustrated by Clare, Audrey Noel, Helen Bellew and such other women who take the initiative to relieve their men of burden and responsibility and drift all alone to their tragic destiny. Ideals of emancipation are but half-baked; the emotional climate of society is not yet suited for such solitary adventures.

Galsworthy means the play to be the tragedy of a particular situation with a heroine who has a set character and moral code of her own. Even when she decides to initiate herself into prostitution, it is not because of her moral laxity, but because she had a firm belief that she could not take anything from anyone without giving something in return. From the sociological point of view, Clare's suicide is an additional evidence to the fact that the Feminist movement contained destructive elements in itself. The emotional tension and maladjustment of the women of that age are symbolized in Clare, justifying the apparently abrupt denouncement. Clare stoops to such a level out of her bitter resentment against the whole world. Yet she is essentially virtuous and her spirit revolts seeking the only immediate outlet, death. Meticulous care has been obviously bestowed on this character with emphasis placed on the spirit of
defiance against conventions and subservience to self-imposed stricures of morality.

Yet, the sudden ending of the play roused adverse criticism. Clare, a lady by instinct, has delicate over sensitive nerves. She is a typical example of the woman of that transition period, where women find it revolting to surrender to their husband’s marital rights in the absence of love, yet find themselves unable to arrive at an alternative solution. Clare tries a desperate last leap which proves to be fatal. She decides to leave her ladyhood behind and degrade herself. But at the critical moment, the inherent sense of decency asserts itself and she puts an end to her unbalanced self. This is perfectly logical and in keeping with her character. With strong passions and prejudices, affection and loyalties Clare always acts on impulses. The positive as well as the negative aspects of ladyhood seeking release from the conventional fetters blend in Clare. The sense of ladyhood is manifest in her innate desire for respectability, decorum and chastity. It is always at clash with the womanly traits of revolt even at the risk of her happiness. Clare breaks the fetters but in that attempt destroys herself also. Galsworthy had a deep analysis of her character in mind when he called The Fugitive a tragedy of ladyhood, to defend Clare against strong adverse criticism.
"Gerald Du Maurier called it the tragedy of a 'fey' woman and was disappointed that Galsworthy did not explore the possibilities of the situations to the full." 3 But it is neither idleness nor selfishness that is responsible for the tragic end. It is, as the playwright emphasises over and over again, what seems to be utter selfishness and absolute disregard for everything conventional is the strict moral scruple of adhering to the principle of morality dictated by her own innerself. At the last minute the sense of decorum asserts itself. " In st.John Ervines vehement attack against the denovement of The Fugitive, he attributes the failure to the artificially contrived situations and Galsworthy's 'Determinism' in his theory that men are creatures of circumstances." 4.

In a problem play specifically meant for exposing a particular situation caused by the clash between social and individual codes of morality, it is inevitable that the circumstances have to be preconceived. With a fixed character like that of Clare with a strong individuality of her own in an atmosphere of rigid codes of conduct, this is the most natural and effective culmination of such a story.

Clare, thus proves to be a failure both as a wife and as a woman. She fails even to keep herself alive. Her ideals do not
serve any real practical purpose in life. It is the reason for this failure in life that Galsworthy wanted to analyse. The strange traits in Clare’s character are introduced to prove his points. The play is a penetrating study of a woman’s tragic end precipitated by a violent clash between her strong sense of individuality and society at large. Acting on impulse is the tragic flaw in this great character. But she is a lady in the real spirit whose only ultimate resort is death. It is a study of a great lady who turned a great tragedy.

"In his lengthy letter to Andre Chevrillon (March, 16. 1913), Galsworthy explains the situation in The Fugitive and contrasts the British and the French Idealism, proving specifically how their respective attitudes to morality differ from each other." ⁵.

The personal interest in such women had made Galsworthy sometimes blind to similar problem man has to face. Because of his own bitter experiences the satirist in him developed and sometimes even outgrew the artist.

Drew. B. Pallatle remarks that “the characterization of this mining, sniffing man of property is an attempt to epitomize what was wrong with the class that had injured Ada.” ⁶.
Clare in *The Fugitive* is one of the best examples of such characters with whom society seems to be sporting. The deterministic forces of society come into full play in her case. The experiment is set up with methodical care, all the details are given earlier so that a scientific deduction could be made in advance. St. John Ervine criticizes Galsworthy for the exaggerated sense of inevitability introduced in *The Fugitive*. “He (Galsworthy) has been called a Determinist because he show his people as the creatures of circumstances, but in his later work, particularly in his play The Fugitive, his Determinism has become willful...he has deliberately tied their hands behind their backs and then exclaims. “These are the victims of adverse circumstances and indeed they are, but the circumstances have been artificially created by Mr. Galsworthy and not by any force that governs the Universe”.
References:


