

A study of morality in the George Eliot's Novel '*Adam Bede*'

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Abstract:

Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name George Eliot, was an English novelist, poet, journalist, translator, and one of the leading writers of the Victorian era. Her primary focus on character analysis from a moral perspective that raised the bar for character development. She firmly holds that a human character is not carved out of stone but rather develops with time. Her main characters have changed from egoism and moral blindness to rigid morality and vision, according to a historical analysis of her writings. The protagonists of her stories tend to be the ones who are open to this beneficial development. George Eliot criticised the moral shortcomings of the main characters in *Adam Bede*. The extreme moral rigidity and lack of empathy displayed by *Adam Bede* do not find any support, while *Hetty Sorrel* and *Aubrey Donnithorne's* moral weakness in the form of temptation, falsehood, licentiousness, narcissism, and unrestrained, reckless living is denounced. Eliot seeks to convey the moral core of her work through the character of *Dinah Morris*. Eliot has a unique quality to make her characters faultless and magnificent.

Keywords: Moral, development, perspective etc.

Eliot succeeded in re-establishing Christian morality on a non-metaphysical and non-doctrinal foundation in her literary works, despite Nietzsche's displeasure with her moral approach. The key to this process was dealing with the implications of one's deeds and acts shaped by one's feeling and conscience. The main characters in all of her books serve as a paradigm for her moral philosophy.

In his book, *Twilight of the Idols*, the 19th century German philosopher Nietzsche criticises George Eliot in the following words: “They have got rid of the Christian God, and now felt obliged to cling all the more firmly to Christian morality. Christianity is a system, a consistently thought-out and complete view of things. If one breaks out of it one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces, one has nothing of any consequence left in one's hand” (Nietzsche 60).

The novel opens with the friendship between Arthur and Adam, Arthur's betrayal of it by luring Adam's fiancée Hetty, and the eventual union of Adam and Dinah form the basis of Adam Bede's story. The plot of this writing has been thoughtfully crafted to allow George Eliot to address the subject of morality through the lens of one's acts and deeds. The primary aspect of difference between Arthur and Adam is their respective approaches to the truth. When Adam finds Arthur in a problematic situation with Hetty, Arthur is deceptive and tries to trick Adam by repressing the fact rather than acting on his innate inclination to speak the truth in love. The reason Arthur maintains his position and refuses to acknowledge his mistakes is because of his inflated sense of self-importance and claimed dignity.

Adam has destroyed Arthur's ideal life; therefore, he never gains Arthur's sympathy. While Adam views his regular sneaky kisses and flirting with Hetty as extremely trivial, for Arthur it is a matter of dignity for both himself and the local populace. The tale contrasts Arthur's faltering commitment to the truth with Adam's unwavering adherence to it. When Arthur downplays the act of kissing Hetty, it is clear that he lacks moral fibre and character. Adam is outraged by this and tells Arthur with complete disgust, “And you've been kissing her, and meaning nothing, have you? And I never kissed her in my life ... but I'd ha' worked hard for years for the right to kiss her. And you make light of it. You think little o' doing what may damage other folks, so as you get your bit o' trifling, a means nothing.”

The ethically careless world of George Eliot Hetty fills an important role. We are informed that Hetty is completely unaffected by religious aspirations or apprehensions. Her mental life is actually just marginally superior to that of a smart creature. As she is erecting a makeshift altar out of a looking glass and adoring her own reflection, it becomes evident what she stands for. K. M. Newton makes these observations in his book *George Eliot: Romantic Humanist*. “With Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede narcissistic self-absorption prevents feeling being shaped morally by experience. Children and animals which would readily call forth human feeling arouse little other than irritation in her” (Newton 55).

Hetty is a fascinating temptation for Arthur. She represents religion to Adam, and his love for her is more significant than its purpose. However, Adam is tricked by Hetty. He is unaffected by her attractiveness; therefore, he cannot imagine what her inner existence is like. Numerous details point to Hetty's lack of moral authority. She doesn't have any sentimental memories of her childhood, pets, or flowers because she didn't find any enjoyment in them. She views her

young cousin as being worse than the filthy little lamb that the shepherd brought in. She is conceited, addicted to pleasure, and afraid of facing challenges.

Adam Bede's admiration for Hetty doesn't touch her since she doesn't believe he can provide her with even the comforts she enjoyed at her uncle's place. Later, determined to hide her pregnancy, she uses deception to consent to Adam's proposal without considering the suffering it will cause him. Mistakes make her more perplexed. Her stupid little mind had been fixated on Arthur as a magnificent source of pleasure. She learns lace repair from the lady's maid at Donnithorne Chase, where she lives with the intention of marrying Arthur Donnithorne and pursuing a life of leisure, pleasure, and luxury. Hetty's lack of cultural sophistication makes her demands of Arthur's protection vulnerable. She can only be persuaded to change by fear of suffering or derision since her egoism is so strong that it disregards the interests and feelings of others. At Thias Bede's burial, hers is the only one with an uneasy mind because Arthur does not show there. Hetty's only motivation for lying to everyone about her troubles is her dread of receiving negative public attention. Because her guilty mind is constantly afraid of being discovered, she tries to stop her baby from crying and eventually kills it.

Hetty apologises to Adam, forgives Arthur, and speaks the truth to Dinah out of fear of an eternal punishment. With the exception of the effects of acute terror, Hetty never relaxes. An unforgiveable crime was committed by Hetty Sorrel when she carelessly left her vulnerable, defenceless, and nameless infant to perish. Stronger condemnation is sparked by infanticide than by any other form of homicide. Despite her lack of empathy, Hetty Sorrel does possess a quality upon which sympathy might be based: the fundamental need to survive. She holds on to life only as the frightened beast holds on to it when she is travelling around looking for Arthur. Strong empathy is evoked for a character whose every action is self-centered as a result of Hetty's travel to Windsor and the events that follow because of George Eliot's narrating style. Hetty curses her partner and despises her child like a burden.

George Eliot's moral aspect is shown clearly with more conviction and poignant in Adam Bede. "the mental picture he forms of Hetty's sufferings not only melts his hard heart but puts him in mind of all women who have suffered from social injustice down the ages." These remarks reflect the Adam's moral growth and turning towards morality. The change in Adam's moral vision is symbolic of Eliot's moral philosophy

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