

Sir gawain and the green knight analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Historical characters draw the immediate attention of the readers because recollection of the past is sweet. Harsh realities of life, stories of adventures are good to read, when the character/s involved in them is believable. The authors have many styles of creating and molding the central character in literary works, and the ancillary characters get their shine from the aura of the central character, like the moon in the star-lit sky.

There are three basic ways a character's personality can be revealed to a reader: what the character thinks about him or herself, how others think and feel about the character and the character's actions help define his or her personality. " (Character...) Moderation is the keyword in this area. Nothing more or nothing less! Eulogize too much and the character becomes illusory, say less to make the character weak! The author has to strike the correct balance.

The author creates different situations, to make the reader aware of the grit and determination of the character and to bring to the fore the authentic traits, the strong points of the character. This is how the personality of the character is built. Desperate situations are created and the central character finds desperate remedies to meet those challenges. " This is how the personality of Sir Gawain, the central character of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, is depicted. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a great medieval poem written by an unknown author who is believed to be a contemporary of Chaucer. (Character)

How Gawain molds himself as per the demands of the situations, and in each situation emerges victorious, rich in understanding and maturity, is the

underlying strength of the poem. The introduction of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has the element of drama. The all-green appearance of Green Knight adds to the dramatic situation further. It is Christmas time, everyone present in the dining hall in King Arthur's court is in high spirits and jovial mood, and Green Knight stuns the august audience, with the frightening challenge.

He speaks about the beheading game, when one of the knights needs to cut off his head (Green Knight) and in 12 months and a day trace the Green Knight and permit the Green Knight to chop off that knight's head. None of the so-called brave knights is willing to accept the challenge. Green Knight ridicules the gathering to anger King Arthur who comes forward to accept the challenge. Gawain enters the scene. He pleads with King Arthur to let him accept the challenge. He does not brag about his courage, he remains humble and says, " The weakest, well I know, and wit feeblest, And the loss of my life will be the least of any" (Character.. 08)

It is more a call of duty to Gawain, than the call of courage. He is King Arthur's nephew. The challenge is the demonstration of love and selflessness and his willingness to sacrifice for a cause. In the given situation he is the greatest of all knights. What is great about an individual if at the time of test, one's courage fails? The first part of the challenge, beheading the Green Knight, though ghastly, is the simple act from the point of view of warriors. The next part is the odd one. One can see Gawain's ascendancy, as for his character and courage, and he is ready to leave to accomplish his mission.

He is accorded a warm send-off by the royal knights. About his arduous task he says, “‘ Why should I tarry? ‘ and smiled/with tranquil eye ‘ In destinies sad or merry/True men can but try”(Character...214). Gawain accepts the challenge thrown at him by destiny and is attired in the finest armor. His shield is special, that has five-pointed star of Solomon which symbolizes truth, and St. Mary's picture on the back. His sojourn begins in November which is a tough month from the point of view of climate. He is on the look out for the green chapel where he would meet the Green Knight.

Once mounted on the horseback, he never looks back. This indicates his dedication, perseverance and commitment. The cupid is ready with the arrow to test the strength of integrity and morality of Gawain. The castle that Gawain finds in the middle of mist is in response to his entreaty for a place to stay to enjoy the Yule time feast. He is welcomed warmly into the castle, without first seeking his introduction. That formality is carried out during dinner. The lord of the castle is highly pleased to know about Gawain's credentials and the noble and adventurous mission.

The author writes, “ Then laughed he loudly, so elated he was And the men in that household made haste with joy To appear in his presence promptly that day That of courage ever-constant, and customs pure Is pattern and paragon, and praised without end Of all the knights on earth most honored is he”(Character.... 221). Two ladies enter Gawain's room. One is old and Gawain receives her with due reverence, and the second one, the beautiful young woman, is accepted in open arms by Gawain with a kiss. Now follows a test for his honesty as designed by the lord of the castle.

It is the game of mutual exchange of gifts. The lord will give his gains during the day and Gawain will reciprocate by giving all that he gained during the day. On the first day the young lady enters Gawain's room and seduces him, that turns out to be subtle, and she gives him one kiss. The second day's seduction is confined to sweet nothings of words and she gives him two kisses. Gawain has tackled her tactfully on the second day also. The third day, Gawain is in trouble, the lady arrives with a seductive dress and she crouches on the sleeping Gawain.

The mutual kissing game begins, but Gawain soon realizes about his wrong action and stops further play. The lady accepts his refusal and is in all admiration for him. She gives him the protective belt to face the Green Knight but the selfishness and self-protectiveness of Gawain comes to the fore as he returns to the master the three kisses only but not the belt. He behaves like any normal human being, to whom life is very dear and one would go to any extent to save one's life. Gawain proceeds to face the Green Knight. Now this beheading game is no ordinary game.

Green Knight is preparing for the ultimate duel and he is sharpening the axe. Gawain does not shirk his responsibility and hails the Green Knight. Green Knight is ready to take the first strike, and Gawain observes him. The Green Knight abruptly stops the swing only to taunt Gawain. Gawain asks him to strike again. Outwardly he pretends to be brave, but he is afraid of the impending death. Green Knight prepares to strike again, as Gawain stands still, but again stops. Gawain is tired of the empty threats of the Green Knight and requests him to proceed with the job.

The third stroke grazes past Gawain, and it is not fatal. The Green Knight then explains to Gawain the significance behind the strokes and compliments him for his loyalty, makes him aware how his loyalty faltered during the last night in the company of the young lady. Gawain admits his mistake and the Green Knight condones his lapse. The Green Knight's farewell discourse to Gawain is philosophical and borders spirituality.

Conclusion: Gawain returns to Camelot as an enlightened human being. He gives the honest account of all that happened to him and the experiences that he has undergone.

Throughout the poem we see Gawain's candid efforts to uphold the principles of truth to the extent he could. He falters once, facing the inevitable, certain death. This makes the character human and acceptable. There is nothing in the poem to condemn him, and one can see everything in his personality to sympathize and support him. Any human being has deficiencies, and therefore he is a human being with flesh and blood! He reacts to situations from the level of the mind. The Green Knight can visualize and experience issues beyond the mind level and therefore he does not harm Gawain and admires his loyalty and courage.