

THE SINCERE CONFESSION OF SIN AND REWARD OF REPENTANCE AS A SALVATION THROUGH LEO TOLSTOY'S 'THE REMORSEFUL SINNER'

**Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad**

Head and Assistant Professor in English
MGV's Samajshree Prashantdada Hiray
Arts, Science & Commerce College, Nampur,
Tal-Baglan, Dist-Nashik.
E-mail: gaikwadkamalakar@gmail.com
Mobile Number: 7559167794

Abstract:

The prime motive of the present research paper is to analyze the awareness, sincere confession and true repentance of seventy year old person and the other malefactor crucified on cross along with Jesus Christ. The researcher has portrayed the reward of true repentance in the form of salvation and direct entry into the heaven or paradise, i.e. the kingdom of god. Awareness, confession and separation from sinful life are the complementary processes which give direct access to heaven. In Leo Tolstoy's short story 'The Remorseful Sinner' there is a demonstration of the complicatedness of a repentant sinner's attempts to enter Heaven. It is based on St. Luke Gospel, Ch.23: 42-43 in the Bible. In this story, a man of seventy years old falls ill. He led a sinful life and never repented of his evil ways. With his last breathing he thoroughly lamented and asked the almighty God to forgive his sins as Jesus Christ forgave the apologetic robber on the cross. Soul of the sinner believed in the mercy of God. The man who lived for seventy years is somewhat like good thief in the bible. He remembers God when he becomes gravely ill and refers to God's mercy and love. After his death, his soul left his body and he found himself in front of the gates of Heaven. But surprisingly the doors were locked. He tries to knock the doors of heaven and prays to enter into the kingdom of god. To enter the Kingdom, he had to plead to God's love because only great love can allow a sinner to enter the land exclusively kept for Saints There he encounters three divine beings or three voices while outside heaven's gates. The story ends with the repentant sinner gaining entry into heaven because he has not been pompous but has repented at the last moment. He has used revered scripture to fight his own case like a public prosecutor and has won for himself a place in God's Kingdom.

Key Words: Awareness and confession of sin, repentance, salvation, heaven, divine beings etc.

ABOUT THE WRITER:

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was born in an aristocratic Russian family at Yasnaya Polyana, South of Moscow. He was a famous Russian novelist, story writer, novelist, philosopher, thinker, essayist, moralist and playwright. He gained nominations for the Nobel Prize in Literature every year from 1902 to 1906 and also for the Nobel Peace Prize three times, i.e. in 1901, 1902, and 1909. He was best known for the novels such as *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1878), These two novels are often referred as the acme



of realist fiction. His semi-autobiographical trilogy *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* (1852) and *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855) gave him literary acclamation. He wrote the best short stories and fictions such as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), *Family Happiness* (1859), and *Hadji Murad* (1912). In the 1870s, Tolstoy created spiritual initiation through his non-fictional work *A Confession* (1882). He skillfully interpreted ethical teachings of Jesus particularly 'Sermon on the Mount' caused him a fanatical Christian agitator and peace maker. He has exposed his significant ideas on non-violent opposition in *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894). In this work, we can visualize a profound impact on Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. He also integrated the monetary philosophy of Henry George through his work *Resurrection* (1899).

INTRODUCTION:

In this research paper, the research wanted to acquaint the readers with the key concepts like committing sin, awareness and confession of sin, separation from sinful life, repentance, salvation as a heavenly reward. To prove the fact, he has offered several instances through the prescribed text and through biblical references.

'At first, he focuses on **'What is Sin?'** In a religious context, sin is an depraved, self-interested, discreditable and detrimental act and is considered to be a misdemeanor against celestial law. It is an wrongdoing against devout or ethical law. Sin can be further classified into four ways, i.e. sin of attitude, action, neglect and intent. In the Catholic Church, there are two types of sins, mortal and venial sins. Mortal sins put in danger our soul and Venial sins are less serious breaches of God's law. According to Biblical scripture, St. Paul says to the church of Romans that no one is righteous, no, not one, no one understands, no one seeks for god. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless, and no one does well, not even one.

'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'¹. (Romans 3:23) Sin is nothing but it is the works of flesh, means actions flowing out of fallen human nature and its desires. St. Paul focuses on the sinfulness of every human being. He asserts, 'Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness'². (Romans 6:12-14) Further St. Paul claims that,

'Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned'³.
(Romans 5:12)

After knowing the information about sin, one can realize the depth of his sins and need to repent for the same and experience the close association of god. Let us turn towards the fact **'What is Repentance?'** It is the condition of being penitent. It is a feeling of apologetic or atonement for doing wrong or sinning. Repentance is the key through which our sins may be blotted out.

'Repent and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.'⁴ (Acts 3:19)
It is the will of god that everyone should regret so that their sins may be forgiven.⁵ (Acts 2:38)
God's kindness leads us towards repentance. Jesus rightly speaks,

'I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'⁶ (Luke 5:32)
True repentance brings god's glory and mercy in our life.



AWARENESS AND SINCERE CONFESSION OF SIN OF OTHER MALEFACTOR ON THE CROSS:

In order to understand the story, it is essential to know what exactly happened on the cross especially in the episode of 'Crucifixion of Christ and two Malefactors' on the cross. If we look at the cross on the 'Golgotha Mount' where Jesus was crucified, we witness two other malefactors who led with Jesus to be put to death. At the place of Calvary, Jesus was crucified at the middle and two malefactors at the right hand and to the left hand of Jesus. One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him and said to Jesus,

'If thou be Christ, Save thyself and Us.'⁷ (Luke 23:39)

But the other malefactor confessed his sin and admitted that he is a sinner. He recognized that Jesus as a son of God. He had strong belief on Jesus saying,

'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.⁸ (I John 1:9)

Therefore he answered and rebuked his colleague,

'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds' but this man (Jesus) hath done nothing amiss.'⁹

The thief wanted to experience the presence of god forever. Godly grief filled in his heart.

'For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.'¹⁰ (II Corinth 7:10)

He also believed in the word of god,

'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation'.¹¹ (Romans 10:10)

The thief said unto Jesus,

'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom'⁵. (Luke 23:40-42)

He issued this appeal from his lips and his spirit departed from his flesh. Immediately his spirit experienced God's love and forgiveness. He ascended to the gates of heaven and prayed to be admitted into them. Jesus observed the true and sincere confession and repentance of another malefactor. To the very moment, Jesus gave him the guarantee of entrance into the heaven / paradise. This was the golden offer for this thief. The repentant sinner's humility and sincerity touched the Lord Jesus so profoundly that he declared that that same day both of them would be in heaven. Here Jesus opened the doors of salvation and heaven for him. And Jesus said to him,

'Verily, I say unto thee, now today shalt thou be with me in Heaven.'⁶ (Luke 23: 43)

In all, Jesus uttered seven sentences on the cross. This was the second sentence uttered by Jesus about the assurance of salvation. The other malefactor lived in this world as a sinner throughout his life and spent his most of the years in evil things and sin. He never felt bad about his ill behaviour and never repent. Now, on the cross, while counting the last hours of his life and having the fear of death, he thoroughly felt bad about his sinful life and wept. He begged Jesus to forgive him. After his death, his soul went before the gates of Heaven, but they are locked. The man knocks and knocks at the gates, but in vain. His soul cried out and identified the love of Jesus. He strongly believed in mercy of Jesus. The Bible declares that 'God is love' which is an astonishing experience for every sinner because God is familiar with the flaws of human beings.



AWARENESS AND SINCERE CONFESSION OF SIN OF SEVENTY YEAR OLD PERSON:

'The Repentant Sinner' / The Penitent Sinner (1886) is a thought-provoking short story written by Russian author Leo Tolstoy. The story depicts the complicatedness of a repentant sinner's attempts to enter Heaven. It is based on St. Luke Gospel, Ch.23: 42-43 in the Bible. In this story, a man of seventy years old falls ill. He led a sinful life and never repented of his evil ways. With his last breathing he thoroughly lamented and asked the almighty God to forgive his sins as Jesus Christ forgave the apologetic robber on the cross. Soul of the sinner believed in the mercy of God. The man who lived for seventy years is somewhat like good thief in the bible. He remembers God when he becomes gravely ill and refers to God's mercy and love. After his death, his soul left his body and he found himself in front of the gates of Heaven. But surprisingly the doors were locked. He tries to knock the doors of heaven and prays to enter into the kingdom of god. It seems that this seventy-year-old man is in a tight spot and trying to influence his way into heaven by quoting Biblical texts. To enter the Kingdom, he had to plead to God's love because only great love can allow a sinner to enter the land exclusively kept for Saints There he encounters three divine beings or three voices while outside heaven's gates.

- a. The Apostle Saint Peter, the first Pope of the Catholic Church.
- b. King David, from whose ancestral line the Lord Jesus descended.
- c. Saint John, the evangelist, also the most beloved disciple of Lord Jesus.

1. VOICE OF ST. PETER, THE APOSTLE:

At first, he heard a voice saying:

'Who is knocking on the doors of Heaven? What kind of deeds this man has done in his entire life?'¹²

And the voice of an appellant answered and determined the amount of all the aberrant actions of this man and didn't talk about any good conduct. And a voice from behind the door answered:

'Sinners cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Go away from here'⁸.

And the man said:

'My God! I listen to your voice but don't notice your face and don't acquaint with your name'¹³.

And the voice answered that he is Peter, the apostle. And the sinner said:

'Have a mercy on me, Peter the Apostle, remembers human flaws and the leniency of God. You have heard Jesus's teaching from your mouth and saw the example of his life. Bear in mind when he suffered and his soul grieved and three times he asked you to stay conscious and pray in Gethsemane Garden, but you slept, because your eyes became grave, and three times he found you sleeping. I did just the same. And remember, that you, before his death, had promised not to surrender him, and that you denied him three times when he was led to Caiaphas. I did just the same. And also keep in mind when a rooster crowed, and you came out and wept acrimoniously. I did just the same. You can't not let me in'¹⁴.

In spite of a life-long companionship and teaching from Christ, Peter the Apostle could not change himself. Then it is natural the repented sinner could not do any good deed while he was



on the earth. But these arguments of the repented sinner did not make any intuition upon the saint and the gate of heaven was not opened to him and the voice of Peter was silent. And the voice behind the doors of Heaven went silent.

2. THE VOICE OF DAVID, KING AND PROPHET :

And, after a short time, the sinner started again to knock and beg to be admitted in the Kingdom of Heaven. And the other voice from behind the doors said:

‘Who is this man? And how did he live in the world’¹⁵?

And the voice of a complainant answered and again repeated all the ghastly manners of the sinner, and didn’t mention any good ones. And a voice from behind the door answered:

‘Go away from here: such sinners can’t live with us in Heaven.’¹⁶

And the sinner said:

‘Lord, I hear your voice, but I do not see your face, and I don’t know your name’¹⁷.

And the voice said to him that he is David, king and prophet. And the sinner did not anguish, didn’t move away from the doors of Heaven and began to say:

‘Take pity on me, king David, and memorize the human faults and the mercy of God. God loved you and overestimated you before men. All you had – and the kingdom, and glory, and prosperity, and wife, and children, and you saw the wife of a poor man from the rooftop, and sin has entered in you and you took Bathsheba, stunning young wife of Uriah, and killed him himself with the rapier of the Ammonites. You, the rich man, robbed the last lamb from a poor man and devoured him himself. So I did the same, too. I accept my guilt and repent my sin.” So did I, you cannot but let me in.’¹⁸

And the voice behind the doors went silent.

3. THE VOICE OF ST. JOHN, THE EVANGELIST:

And the sinner stood a little longer, again began to beg to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven. And he heard the third voice from behind the doors, which said:

‘Who is this man? And how did he live in the world?’¹⁹

And the voice of an accuser answered, and the third time enumerated the evil deeds of the man, and did not mention any good. And the voice from behind the door answered:

‘Go away from here: sinners cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven’²⁰.

And the sinner answered:

‘I hear your voice, but do not see your face, and do not know your name’²¹.

And the voice answered that he is St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple of Christ. And the sinner rejoiced and said:

‘Now it is impracticable not to confess me: Peter and David will let me in because they know human weakness and the clemency of God. And you will let me in because you have a lot of affection in you. You are John the Evangelist, who wrote in your book that God is Love, and that anyone who doesn’t love, doesn’t know God? Wasn’t that you who, in his old age, told people just one word: “Brothers, love one another!” Would you now hate me and send me away? So abandon from what you said, or love me and let me in to the Kingdom of Heaven.’²²



Therefore the repented sinner requested St. John to let him enter the kingdom of Heaven, because John alone enjoyed the depth of God's love. At once the gate of Heaven was opened and the repented spirit entered. And the gates of Heaven got open and John embraced the repentant sinner and admitted him into the Kingdom of Heaven. The story ends with the repentant sinner gaining entry into heaven because he has not been proud but has repented at the last moment. He has used sacred scripture to fight his own case like a lawyer and has won for himself a place in God's Kingdom. In Luke 15:10, it is written that,

‘There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, than there is over the ninety nine who have no need of repentance’.²³

• **AWARENESS AND SINCERE CONFESSION OF SIN OF ZACCHEUS, THE TAX COLLECTOR:**

Let us take one more example based on true repentance and salvation. There was a tax collector named Zaccheus from the province of Judea. (Luke 19:1-10) In those days, to be a tax collector was to be a sinner. Zaccheus obtained his great possessions by accumulating more taxes from people in Roman government and kept a large portion of the difference in his pocket. Thus Zaccheus was one of the most abhorrent persons in the area of Jericho. But Kindness and love is the supreme quality of God. He never hates and despises the sinners. In fact, he hates sin and not the sinners. Jesus, the son of God, came to seek out and to save the sinners.

‘Those who are well have no need of a surgeon, but those who are unwell. I have not come to call the blameless but sinners to repentance’.²⁴ (Luke 5:31-32)

Zaccheus was an inheritor of Abraham and Jesus saw in him something that could be saved. This is why the Word, in the form of Jesus, was made flesh and came to live among the believers. He came to re-establish our wrecked association with God. Christ came to offer us the things in abundant proportion which we lost through insurgence and insubordination. We were made to live in unity with God. When we accept the offer of Jesus we experience the tranquility that Zaccheus experienced when salvation came to his house. We cannot achieve this salvation on our own. Men have tried to obtain peace but they failed. But Jesus gave us eternal peace. Basically the happiness on the earth and happiness in heavenly kingdom depends on our relationship with God.

CONCLUSION:

The story in a real sense is an excellent meditation on God's grace and manifestation of human being's corrupt nature. It also highlights the attempts of contrite sinner for entering into the sovereignty of god. For this noble cause, he knocks three times on the doors of heaven and encounters three divine beings to check out his worthiness to enter into heaven. The first two knocks bring Peter and David respectively to the gates to interrogate the sinner. When they reply, after hearing the plaintiff condemns them, that the sinner cannot enter, the sinner is able to challenge them on the many sins that they committed during their lifetime. But the third knock brings John, the evangelist who experienced the love of God, allows the repentant sinner into heaven.



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. The Bible, New Testament, Romans 3::23
2. Ibid, Romans 6:12-14
3. Ibid, Romans 5:12
4. Ibid, Acts 3:19
5. Ibid, Acts 2:38
6. Ibid, Luke 5:32
7. Ibid, Luke 23:39-43
8. Ibid, I John 1:9
9. Ibid, II Corinth 7:10
10. Ibid, Romans 10:10
11. Ibid, Luke 15:10
12. Ibid, Luke 19:1-10
13. Ibid, Luke 5:31-32
14. Tolstoy, Leo. 'The Remorseful Sinner', Kindle Publications, December 2015.
15. 'Tolstoy in Color' Tolstoy Studies Journal, Tolstoy Society of North America, 27 June 2018.
16. 'Tolstoy'. Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.
17. 'Leo Tolstoy'. Encyclopedia. Retrieved 4 September 2018.
18. 'The Works of Tolstoy' Black's Readers Service Company: Roslyn, New York. 1928.

WEB REFERENCES:

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repentance_\(story\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repentance_(story))
2. <http://www.earthlyfireflies.org/the-remorseful-sinner-by-lev-tolstoy>
3. <http://kjtenglishnotes.blogspot.com/2016/03/the-repentant-sinner-by-tolstoy>
4. <https://www.insaneowl.com/the-repentant-sinner-analysis-by-Leo-Tolstoy>
5. <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-messages-ideas-were-conveyed->
6. <https://presentationparish.org/blog/repentant-sinner>
7. <https://www.enotes.com/topics/the-penitent-sinner>