

**CHARACTERISATION OF IMPORTANT WOMEN  
CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS WAR AND PEACE AND  
QUIET FLOWS THE DON-A PARALLEL STUDY**

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## **6. CONCLUSION**

### **6.0. INTRODUCTION**

To compare the leading women characters from two of Russia's most celebrated writers is a task that involves indepth research. To understand their psychology or even that of the writers's is a challenge. Despite this, an honest and comprehensive study has been conducted and the following findings have been derived based on the hypothesis which had been formulated at the beginning of the study. We had formulated the hypothesis based on our understanding of Tolstoy and Sholokhov. As we progressed with the study a lot of new findings evolved. Some of the assumptions were found to be true while some were not. The findings are highlighted in detail below:

### **6.1 MAJOR FINDINGS**

- 1) “*War and Peace*” by Leo Tolstoy is a grand novel of magnificent scale. It cannot however be called a “historical novel”. History acts as a thread that binds together all the characters in a “complex human drama”. Tolstoy’s characters and their lives centre on the burning actuality of the times. He does, mention the epic struggle between Russia and Napoleon from Austerlitz to Berezina and reproduces all the political life since beginning of the century and places on the stage all the principal heroes of that troubled time: Napoleon, Alexander, Kutuzov, Rostopchin, Speransky, etc are presented at the most critical time in their lives. Without making an attempt to influence our judgement, he succeeds in stripping from several of them the masks in which official history has clothed them, and in destroying our deep rooted prejudices about them. He examines so thoroughly the souls of his characters and the

harmony of their conscious and unconscious thoughts, and their exterior actions are rendered so evident, that the less he seeks to convince us the more we are struck by the justice of his views. War is the backdrop of the novel and given the case it is necessary to mention the details of the French invasion of Russia. Tolstoy made his debut while he was in the army during the Crimean war and knows all the vicissitudes of military life. Hence he describes in detail the military life of the officers. History, in this extraordinary work, merely plays the part of a huge disturbing element; it acts on a host of actors, high or low, as a foreign body would act if a powerful hand threw it in to the midst of our planetary system. It does not change men, but it gives them new and unforeseen opportunities. It changes the cold, heartless profligate, the man of prey, who lives but for his material pleasures, in to a brave man, and sometimes in to a hero. It brings out the dormant capacities and virtualities. It reveals all sorts of secrets to man. It brings men constantly before a formidable unknown. It exasperates some; it calms and soothes others. It gives to all the tender relations of life a new intensity, by depriving them of security. It is a powerful motor, but it is only a motor; the masses which it puts in to motion are already formed of determined units, and each of these units is a human soul, a world in itself, shrouded in mystery.

Conceived in this sense, Tolstoy's work has all the variety of human experience; it is less a novel than a succession of pictures, of small scenes, in which we often see the same actors. The basic idea in 'War and Peace' is the duality of human life, both personal and historical, and the mutual influence of the one upon the other, man acts in history and history intrudes in to his life. But this mutual influence is understood by Count Tolstoy one-sidedly: the individual acts in history, participates in events, in the pragmatic side of history, and works at the changing of socio-cultural forms, in which its sociological side consists, but Count Tolstoy sees and

comprehends only the first, the sum of consequential personal acts outside the movement of social forms. Furthermore, the action of history upon the individual sometimes work in two ways, namely: the direct influence of events upon the inner world of the individual, and upon the changing of the social forms in which the individual must live; and here Count Tolstoy recognizes only the first and illustrates it clearly in the novel, while all conceivable changes he declares as something having nothing to do with the personal life. Such a one-sided approach narrows Count Tolstoy's historical horizons and make his philosophy sceptical as soon as it comes in to contact with social activity and fatalistic as soon as it sees an individual trying to do anything in the name of any social idea. Personal initiative in social matters and an independent attitude to their direction remains to him a mystery by virtue of the unconscious 'Swarm' activity of people, and he wavers between looking at it all as something illusory or as something in which one is forced to see a blind force seving to bring in to being the prescriptions of historical laws.

Count Tolstoy sees sense only in the personal life and here he is the prophet of moral rebirth. But the sense of historical life is closed to him; he sees only external movement, only events, only the pragmatic side of history, but the inner aspects of historical movement, the continual changing of social forms, not of course indifferent to a good, full and free personal life, a continual posing and a continual solving of social questions Count Tolstoy does not accept at all; he is like a blind man who only feels the warmth of the sun on a hot day but does not see the sun's rays or the sunlight. History, devoid of its real sense, could not receive from Count Tolstoy any ideal sense, in the understanding of that purpose which it must realize in order to satisfy our subjective demands from life, although it does give to personal life a purpose in an ethical ideal. A process without inner content, without purpose, the

attainment of which we could achieve for ourselves by participating in that process, is a fatal advance of the insuperable power of things, removing any possibility of judgement on it on our part apart from a purely moral evaluation of the behaviour of those participating in the events, and the action of some ‘Law’ which turns living people in to the parts to some huge mechanism—that is what history is as Count Tolstoy understands it.

Here realism, remaining on the summit of its setting in the poetry of ‘*War and Peace*’ and in consequence of its combination with an ethical idealism, turns in to the purest naturalism because Count Tolstoy sees in social ideals, in the form of ‘freedom, Equality and Culture’, only simple ‘attractions’, although they have the same meaning as his ethical ideal of ‘simplicity, good and truth’. Naked realism, denying the creation of any ideals, certainly moves over in to naturalism, and the philosophy of history in ‘*War and Peace*’ serves only to support this truth, along with the main body of the novel where Count Tolstoy combines realism with idealism. Count Tolstoy’s philosophy of history from this point of view can characterize all his literary activity as that of a great realist who resolves, however, all life’s questions on the basis of a personal ethic and is indifferent to social forms as forms, and also posits that as it were social attitudes must be regulated by a personal morality, the ethic of a personally righteous life. Such a philosophy, however, cannot be simultaneously a philosophy of society and of history.

2) Tolstoy has no obsession with weaving grand romantic scenes. He does show us romances but delves into the psychology of the characters and their feelings. There are no syrupy and mushy dialogues between the lovers. We are just presented with certain situations where the young lovers find themselves in. We can never see long romantic notes sung by Andrei for Natasha. Even when he shows us that Pierre is

attracted to Helene; it is his innermost psychology that he plays with. Pierre is never given a wooing scene with Helene. As we conclude the novel, we can see the logic in this tendency. Tolstoy feared that focusing too much on romantic pursuits would lead to losing out on larger and more crucial aspects like the innermost thinking of the characters which in turn would give a more accurate and realistic account and justification of their actions.

The author gives the readers the knowledge of human nature that is complete with fruitful and aesthetic pleasure. Mikhail Sholokhov on the other hand was more of a progressive in this regard. Grigory and Aksinia is described in detail. He presents everything and equates it with nature. Grigory's initial meetings with Aksinia prior to their affair are described with apt strokes. Aksinia unknowingly tempting him her movements and how Grigory wants to strike conversation with her are all described:

“The wind fluttered her skirt and played with the fine, fluffy curls on her swarthy neck. Her flat, embroidered cap flamed on her heavy knot of hair, her rose-coloured shift, gathered into her skirt at the waist, clung smoothly to her steep back and compact shoulders. As she climbed the slope she bent forward, and the hollow between her shoulders showed clearly beneath her shift. He saw the brownish rings under her arms, where her shift was stained with sweat. Grigory watched her every movement. He wanted to renew the talk with her...” Grigory uses imagery for describing Aksinia and tells her that her hair smelt of henbane. Grigory and Aksinia's romance is explained in a sequence and readers feel engrossed in the course of events. Sholokhov presents two types of romance in the novel.

3) Sholokhov possesses a rare gift for aesthetics true poetic description of situation that his characters find them in. Sholokhov possesses a rare gift for penetrating the very essence of the simple working man's character, revealing his thoughts, feelings and aspirations with warmth and understanding. As he describes the characters he viewed true vivid details as well. "Hard-working" figures as one of the most positive epithets in the novel. "He's a hard-working lady", people say approvingly of Grigory, while "hard-working Natalya" soon wins the hearts of her parents in- law. The proud and beautiful Akhinya is rarely to be seen unoccupied. She fetches water from the Don, whitewashes the house, milks the cow, and gathers the hay in the wake of the movers. During the hard years when there is hardly a man left in the village she repairs the roof and goes mowing and sowing with Dunya.

4) The heroes, of the novel are often described as having "*skilful hands, itching for work*", "*toiler's hands*", "*fingers roughened by work*". Sholokhov's descriptions of work are almost always concrete and visual. He shows us his heroes actually at work, the way they work. We see Pantelei Prokofyevich at the mowing, for which the whole village turned out as though for an annual holiday as his "hook-nose shone as though freshly varnished, the sweat clung to the hallows of his swarthy cheeks. He smiled, baring a closest row of white, gleaning teeth in his raven beard, the scythe through the grass. A seven – foot semicircle of mown grass lay at his feet". Grigory is described during the reaping: "He could hardly open his parched lips. He gripped his pitchfork closer to the prongs in order to get a better leverage on the heavy swathes, and breathed spasmodically. His dripping chest itched from sweat. From under his hat it poured down his face and stung his eyes like soap". The passage is intended to convey the beauty inherent in the simplest everyday tasks. And indeed this scene of autumn ploughing, scrupulously accurate down to the last detail, arouses a sense of

beauty and gives true aesthetic pleasure. Another highlight of Sholokhov is that he poetics labour which again is the major characteristic of the toiling Cossacks. A typical feature of Sholokhov's works in his constant loving interest in the life of toiling masses. He gives a picture tremendous in range and penetration, of the spiritual strength and wealth of simple Russian folk. That Sholokhov's art grows out of the life of the working people is apparent in his very choice of characters.

5) Beauty and nobility are inseparable from the life and struggle of the people in Sholokhov's works. In his vast, impressive canvases of the life of the people we feel Sholokhov's passionate involvement his real concern for the victory of the communist ideal as being truly noble and lofty. While poeticising labour and the real life of toil of the Cossack farmers in contrast with the idle, hence futile life on the Listnitsky estate, Sholokhov never donned rose coloured spectacles. He did not hesitate to reveal the evil power of property instincts that had such a grip in Cossack life, showing how it disfigured human beings and dehumanised them.

He brilliantly disclosed the splendid image of Ilyinichna as the fine, noble character she was, he brings out Natalya's inner beauty more evocatively and filled in Aksinya's psychological characteristics, giving her a harmonious completeness and perfection. Sholokhov widens the image to include the beautiful month of May and spring rain, thereby enhancing Aksinya's freshness, health and beauty to correspond to the reader's increased sympathy for her after her conversation with Grigory. A writer's aesthetic values are determined by his perception of life. The images Sholokhov used to reveal Aksinya's nature invariably coincide with perception of beauty as understood by the people. Sholokhov uses such images not only to bring out a character's nobility of soul, but also to show changes that have taken place. His imagery is closely linked with the flow of life itself. He compares the young Aksinya

leaving to live with Grigory at Yagodnoye to such natural phenomena as symbolise the flowering of life. The scent of hay after a spring shower in the steppe is suggestive of youthful strength and vigour. Many years later, when time and suffering have left their mark on Aksinya, she is compared to a lily of the valley, touched by mortal decay but still beautiful.

6) Leo Tolstoy began the novel in the year 1805 in St.Petersburg at a soiree given by Anna Pavlovna Scherer who was the maid of honour and confidante to the queen mother Maria Feodorovna. At the soiree we see how the elite aristocrats discuss politics. And also indulge in gossips. The most powerful woman in the Russian court in those times was queen mother Maria Feodorovna who had a very strong influence over her son, Tsar Alexander I. Prior to Tsar Alexander I, his grandmother Catherine the great was the ruler of Russia. Hence we can see that the nation was used to having women adorning the governing positions. However the main women characters in the novel such as Natasha, Marya and Helene are distinct from each other in terms of beauty, wealth and character.

For the purpose of the study we have chosen three women characters and all three are diverse in nature. Tolstoy presents his most important lady character as someone who makes many wrong choices in life. Tolstoy gives her the freedom of going from one relationship to another without having any really attachment to any of them. However she does realise her mistakes. The assumption that women in those times were submissive is not true. Helene is a case in point. She is extremely beautiful and is shown having innumerable sexual encounters with men in order to realize her goals and fancies. She is shown as a materialistic woman who has no love for anyone, not even her husband Pierre. The society welcomes Helene with open arms. No one sees her superficiality and wants to be associated with her, irrespective

of her immoral lifestyle. No one seems to have any reservations about having her in their midst. Beautiful as she is her character is tarnished by adultery. Tolstoy shows us such a character in order to bring out the paltriness. In today's contemporary world the presence of such a woman in our social circles would definitely raise a few eyebrows. Helene is there only as a bad model for women to follow. She ultimately dies at the end of the novel due to her eccentric lifestyle.

7) The concept of morality was however an important concern for them. The characters of Marya bring forth the importance of virtue in the society. Tolstoy was had the opinion that the society can sustain itself only when high standards of decency can be established. Tolstoy was highly particular when it came to the behavior and conduct of women. Marya is not blessed with amazing looks and she is a very bad bargain in the marriage market. No one wants to marry her. She has a lot of wealth and that is the only attractive thing about her amidst prospective suitors. Tolstoy depicts her in all goodness and despite her apprehensions. Marya is a role model for all other women. The idealist that Tolstoy was he appreciates such virtues and the best possible ends awarded to such women. Marya contrary to belief gets to marry Nikolai Rostova and has lovely children by him.

The author plays by the rule "good begets good". Morality and virtue as in any other society are things that can be prioritized according to one's wish. The society is "war and Peace" consists of the privileged lot who value the external fancy more and hence the preoccupation for superficial things like beauty. Morality was not given much of a stress in social circles. As we end the novel, we are at bliss so are the characters who have survived the tests of time. There is contentment in the end and a scope for a promising future.

8) Mihail Sholokhov gives a lot of stress on the importance of projecting human emotions as raw as possible. Unlike Tolstoy he is never judgemental of his characters, male or female. There is sincerity in his works. Human beings are subject to actions as dictated by their heart many atimes NAD this may or may not lead to their decline. Sholokhov's description of life in Tatarsky village reveals the social heterogeneity of the Cossacks exploding the myth of the Cossacks being a solid caste. The Melekhov family is the central focus ground for the readers and here we see an aura of the prosperity hung over the house hold.

The firm hand of the thrifty Pantelei Prokofyevich made itself felt in every thing. The hot tempered head of the family would stand for no nonsense and was quick to take stern measures in cases of disobedience or argument even. He brings his crutch down on Grigory's back, uses his fists on his long suffering wife and whips Darya with leather reins when she tries to "replace" her husband in his absence. His will was law in the family. Such was the age old custom, encouraged by the church teaching of obedience to one's elders. The Cossack paterfamilias was absolute ruler in his household. The society had its rules about the position of women. The women are shown as extremely hard working. Grigory's mother Ilyinichna is a case in point .She takes charge of the domestic afairs of the family and in addition to this works in the fields with the husband. Aksinia and Natalya too are shown as hard working. Even Darya and Dunya share the work at the farm. However it is a a patriarchal society that prevailed. The women were beaten up by their menfolk.Ilyinichna and Aksinia bear the brunt of their husband's belt often. Women are never considred as equal to men in terms of having a say in the society and are considered the weaker sex. However when it comes to sharing work, both men and women are equal. "And quiet flows the Don" is set in the early twentieth century, which is a good hundred years after Tolstoy wrote

“War and peace”. Despite the advanced years, the mindset of the people is not developed enough to accept the fact that women have an important contribution in their lives and that they deserve respect. Despite all these restrictions, extra marital affairs were happening in this very society. Aksinia and Grigory’s relationship is subject to much gossip and the village does not accept this as is accepted. After their elopement Grigory’s family faces a lot of humiliation and most of all his wife Natalya. Logically her condition is pathetic and is one that deserves sympathy. The society treats her with utmost dishonour. Natalya overhears a few young men discussing that she was found having an affair with her father in law and this is the reason that her husband was absconding. Such a rumour proves too much for Natalya and she attempts suicide. However Natalya gradually evolves as a very strong character. She is able to bear a lot of emotional and physical pain. The process of describing the birth of her twins leaves us with surprise as we understand her ability to tolerate pain of the extreme level. Natalya always lives within the confines of domesticity and never breaks her marriage vows.

However characters such as Darya are shown to violate the norms of the society. Darya is a character who despite living in such a strict family has numerous sexual encounters with other men both before and after her husband Pyotr’s death. She even tries to get physical with her father in law who whips her black and blue for this. Sholokhov tries to show us that the more the women were subject to suppression; the more they tried to break the shackles. Daya is a rebel and ends her life after finding out that she had a sexually transmitted disease. The war changes the lives of all families in the Don. The Melekhov family is completely devastated. The daughter of the house, Dunya chooses Misha Koshevoi, a communist who was also the murderer of her eldest brother Pyotr. Ilyinichna has her reservations about this but is

not able to protest. Sholokhov presents the lives of women as insignificant because it was how it was in those days in the Don. Natalaya and Aksinia both die in the end. This is not as a punishment or anything but simply in order to intensify the drama of human suffering. All the major women characters in the novel die except for Dunya and Grigory is left all alone with his son.

Apart from the other significant observations have also been found and are as below:

The domestic side of the novel "*And quiet flows the Don*" raises a question no less important than the one we have just been discussing in connection with the political section. This part contains the personification of the moral's conceptions and general culture of upper class society at the beginning of this century and this fully, widely and freely developed thanks to several types who cast several bright rays of light on the whole of the class to which they belong in spite of being mere silhouettes or sketches. There is no place here for the reproaches about the glorifications of ignorance and barbarity and which several critics laid at the author's door in connection with his best work, the Cossacks.

Here, on the contrary, we find ourselves in the midst of the most refined, civilised company, replete with elegance, French dialects and the unceasing analysis of the author which tells us the real meaning of almost every movement he has his character make, their look, word and even their clothes because in this peculiar world people express themselves far more through illusive signs hints and all sorts of little ways than through's simple human speech, behaviour or the natural play of expression on the face. One must provide oneself with a special key to understand their relationships one with the other and one must be initiated into the secret meaning

of the hieroglyphs, with which they deceive each other, in order to know their real thoughts and intentions. The author belongs to the initiated. He knows their language and uses it to discover the death of the frivolity, insignificance, craftiness and sometimes the completely crude, uncivilized and base pretensions beneath all the forms of social behaviour. One example is particularly remarkable. The members of this circle seem to be ruled by some unkind fate which condemns them to severe retribution-never to achieve any of the objectives, plans or aspirations. As if haunted by some unknown evil force they rush past the objectives they have set themselves and if they reach something it is never what they expected. The only exceptions to this are their least significant and most ordinary plans and calculations: nothing that is the slightest bit serious is allowed them. In following the masterful depictions of the author it is possible to think that there is some special Nemesis specifically constructed for them which strikes them with impotence half way through any enterprise and constantly leaves them with powder and dust instead of the desired benefits.

They succeed in nothing and everything breaks in their hands. Even the most normal human feelings and thoughts either produce a different fruits from those one usually or in a short period of time result is something approaching parody or self – caricature. The young Pierre Bezukhov, who is capable of understanding good and moral worth, marries a society beauty who is as dissolute as she is stupid. Prince Bolkonsky with all the instinct of a serious mind and development, chooses for a wife a nice little empty headed society doll who brings him only happiness, although he has no cause to complain about her semicolon his sister Princes Maria escape from the yoke despotic ways of her father and the continually lonely country life into a warm and bright religion which end in her associating with itinerant priest and so on.

This sad story occurs so often to the best people in the society being described that in the end, at every scene which starts with young fresh life, at every story of some happy event promising a serious or instructive outcome, the reader suffers from fear and doubt: no, all their hopes will founder, they will betray their substance and turn into the impenetrable sands of emptiness and vulgarity where they will perish. And the reader is hardly ever mistaken; they all do turn and perish. But it is asked, what pitiless hand has laid this fate on them all, and for what sins? What has happened? Evidently nothing out of the ordinary. Society continues calmly to live on the basis of serfdom as did its forebears; the doors to the winning of fortune or to ruin in civil or military service are as open as ever to those who have the right to go through them; the State Loan Banks are still operating for their benefit; and finally no new figures crossing their path or confusing their thoughts are to be seen in count Tolstoy's novel. How is it then that this society which at the end of the last century still firmly believed in itself, its members as strong as a castle and dealing with life light heartedly, could now, according to the author, do nothing it wanted to, collapsed on all sides almost despising itself and afflicted with a feebleness which prevented its best people from defining both themselves and any clear objectives for spiritual activity? Remember that between 1796 when Tolstoy novel begins and 1805 only nine years have passed.

How was it possible for such a marked change to take place in such a short space of time? The thought involuntarily occurs to the reader that Tolstoy has perhaps erred in one of two respects: either, left without any reliable witness, he has seen some powerful new force in the course of ten or fifteen years to managed unnoticed faith of a society in the foundations on which it had lived peacefully up to then; or that the picture of the insolvency of this society in the first ten years of this century

and especially its moral suffering expressed mainly through Prince Andrey Bolkonsky, are a little exaggerated and a little anachronistic.<sup>218</sup>

Sholokhov captures the healthy humour of the people, and their ability to spot what is funny in life and derive amusement from it. A rich vein of sparkling humour runs through the whole novel and brightens the darkness of the tragic concluding chapters. There are harmless and spicy jokes, funny stories, songs, and tales of yore that warm the listener's hearts with joy and laughter and malicious jibes. This is something that is totally absent in Tolstoy's *Noval*. Sholokhov does not introduce jokes and humorous characters and situations merely to relieve the tension. The humour stands in its own right no less than the drama. Sholokhov is trying to present a complete picture of an age, and humour is as much a part of life as tragedy. During one of the hardest periods in his life Grigory thinks: "It's a good thing we Cossacks like our fun. Jokes come to stay with us more often than sorrow. By God, if life were all serious I'd have hanged myself long ago." Sholokhov brings in comic descriptions to highlight Pantelei's powerlessness and his loosening impact on the family. Sholokhov very artistically combines comic situations with tragedy. Pantelei's is a case in point.

The war drastically changes the lives of the characters. The courageous fighters for the Revolution for the transformation of the world, characters like the communist Mikhail Koshevoi, Kotlyarov, Likhachov and Podtyolkov, embody the best characteristics of the people. Grigory Melekhov, Aksinya and Duny have many fine and healthy qualities. They refuse to submit to force, and proudly and fearlessly uphold their human dignity their right to give free rein to their feelings. The morality of the old world with all its customs and unwritten laws is to answer for them.

Grigory Melekhov did not go as far as Mikhail Koshevoi in breaking with patriarchal Cossack way of life. The Communist Koshevoi takes up arms to overthrow the hatefully smug and soulless old world, and consciously rejects class society as a whole. With Dunya Melekhova he fearlessly marches forward into the new world. Grigory Melekhov, on the other hand broke with the past without accepting the future. He did not go as far as to completely renounce his class views and habits, and this was his tragedy, that which led him to suffer such trials and hardships, in the Civil War, where he was to lose so many of his finer qualities, and was to cause the death of Aksinya who lived for this “unfortunate man”. Other characters, like Pyotr and Darya Melekhov were able to adapt themselves to the existing order and gain advantage for themselves from it.

The author shows how such acquiescence inevitably led to the loss of many wholesome qualities, that the triumph of the principles of private property was detrimental to the human personality. Pyotr has no scruples about pillaging during the war. With his dream of living in style, he reaches the rank of officer by fawning and flattery, wins medals without risking his life, and generally curries favour with his superiors. His wife Darya rebel against the society and her adulterous lifestyle is also an extension of her frustration and protest against the Patriarchal Cossack way of life where women were not of any importance.

The link between literature and life as Sholokhov sees it is first and foremost a matter of the link between the writer and life. The writer cannot be the guest of the people he is writing about or intends to write about. Knowledge authentic knowledge of life without which art is unthinkable arises from shared experience. As Sholokhov said at the second USSR Writer's congress, “a book is a thing born in travail”.

Sholokhov has rightfully summed up this observation saying “I must say, I and my readers get on pretty well on the whole. A permanent link with one’s reader’s bolsters the writer’s confidence in his ability, and helps his work. But with some of them my relations, if not exactly strained, are rather cool to put it bluntly.”

## **6.2. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LEO TOLSTOY AND MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV**

Leo Tolstoy’s novel was widely discussed by critics across the world. Following are a few critical commentaries:

N.N. Strakhov (1828 -96), Slavophile, writer and critic, was a close friend and correspondent of Tolstoy’s. In his writing, as can be seen here, he usually stressed the value of everything Russian as opposed to Western European. Tolstoy was delighted with this review, as he often was with people who praised him and whom he liked.<sup>246</sup> Following is an excerpt of the review in the critic’s own words:

“Finally, the great work is finished. Finally it lies before us, it is ours forever, and all our worries are over. During the time Tolstoy seemed to be lingering over finishing his labours, we unwillingly suffered from terror and hope. The artist, as we now see, quietly and confidently continued his work! With a firm hand he completed the last part, while we, mere mortals, with our hearts unwillingly missing a beat, awaited the completion of the secret affair. We marveled and were amazed at how the creative power, not weakening for a moment, could function on such a huge canvas, and furthermore, not being able to grasp the magnitude of the power which opened out before us nor managing to accustom ourselves to this magnitude, we feared in our weakness for the completion of the great and invaluable labour. The most frightening

dangers occurred to us. But, finally, the picture is ready and lies completed before us. Its beauty opens out with a new and striking force. Only now do all the details fall in to place, the centre stands out clearly, the colouring of the separate parts clearly appears, and taking in the picture at one look, we can see distinctly its general lighting, the connection between all its figures and the irresistible idea which forms the soul of the whole work and gives it its perfect unity and life. Look in to it, read it and try to survey the story as a whole and the impression will strengthen and grow in proportion to your attention and study. What size and what harmony! We can think of nothing comparable in all literature.

Thousands of characters, thousands of scenes, every conceivable scene of public and private life, history, war, every horror on earth, all the passions and all the moments of human life, from the cry of a newly born baby to the last outburst of feeling in a dying old man, all the joys and griefs of man, every conceivable mood of the soul from the feelings of a thief taking a few roubles from a friend to the supreme actions of heroism and thoughts of inner lucidity-everything is in the picture. Furthermore not a single figure is placed in the shade by any other, not one scene, not one impression interferes with any other, everything is in its place, everything is clear, everything is distinct, every thing is in harmony with itself and the whole. This simple but at the same time unimaginably artistic grouping is not a matter of external imaginings and adjustings; it could only be the result of a geniu's insight, which in one brief and clear-sighted glance takes in and penetrates all the multifarious flow of life".

A.M Skabicjevsky (1838-1910), popularist writer and critic, saw in this review of 'War and Peace' Tolstoy following the same sad path as Gogol-the brilliant writer was becoming a mystic and preacher. His dislike of what he thought was

happening to Tolstoy was even more marked in his review of '*Anna Karenina*'. He said "Evidently Tolstoy has no other objective in mind than the presentation of a picture gallery of paintings of upper class life at the beginning of the century. In this respect the novel is not only irreproachable but may truthfully be called a phenomenon unknown of in Russian literature before and one of its most striking works. Indeed you will find in our literature masses of novels, stories and plays and even poems describing upper-class life but you will not find such a complete, detailed and clear depiction of this life as you will in '*War and Peace*'. You will find a whole series of real living types from the world of the upper classes. In truth characters such as the Bolkonskys, Kuragins and Rostovs, Pierre Bezukhov, Dolokhov, Bilibin and so on are types no less realistic than those in '*Dead Souls*' and can serve as equally good examples of their class as do Chickikov, Manilov, Nozdryov, Plyushkin and so on who have already become by-words for theirs. These types are examined in all the mainsprings of their lives and the tiniest psychological movements."<sup>219</sup>

N.I Kareev (1850-1934) professor of History at the University of St Petersburg opined that "A general verdict on the philosophy of history in '*War and Peace*' may be formulated in the following manner. Count Tolstoy makes the realistic tendency of his talent in to the realms of history and its philosophy and removes from them both idealization and ideology; but where he talks about the life of society as opposed to that of the individual, idealism, which he can well combine with realism, deserts him. For him idealism is only concerned with ethics, idealism, as it were, of righteous living, and is not at all a social idealism, one concerned with the correct forms of social life apart from those which are controlled by a personal ethic. This one-sidedness of his whole outlook on life has its roots in a certain misconception of social life; he will declare that 'real' life continues, quite independent of all

conceivable social change; he will affirm that only the criminal, ridden by passion, knows where the real ‘be in public’ lies; he will pour irony upon all the social activity which his characters engage in; he will develop the idea that only unconscious life has any sense; he will affirm that in the history of society everything happens of itself and that historical figures are but labels for events; he will discuss historical laws which, according to his prescription, are fulfilled only by people performing social activity, and so on. At the same time as his realism leads him along the correct path, this misconception of the real content of history, its sociological aspect, makes him lose his way and his philosophy of history appears as a mixture of surprisingly true and strikingly false ideas, together with a mass of inner contractions which are explained by the fact that their exposition has been little worked out, by an insufficient consideration of the idea itself, and by a complete disregard for any larger definition of his concepts.”<sup>220</sup>

**V.Kosov-** “Sholokhov is constantly involved in the life of the people, when he travels out to afield camp, sits chatting with the tractor drivers by their bonfire of an evening, or when he meets an old acquaintance in the street. Out fishing or hunting, receiving people in his capacity as deputy, whrever he may be, he is among the people who interest him not because he may one day write about them, but for their actual life, their hopes, dreams and sorrows.The link that Sholokhov ses between literature and life is first and foremost a matter of the link between the writer and life.

**Lenin –** “A sense of humour is a splendid healthy quality.... there’s much of it in life as sadness, no less....

**Gorky-** Sholokhov has a wonderfull sense of humour. His ability to see the funny side of life as well as the tragic is one of the qualities of the talent.

**I. Aralichev-** Sholokhov always portrayed the ordinary working people with especial warmth and penetration.....It is significant that he draws on new material in his works from the wars and post war years. The radical changes that have taken place in the mentality and position of the people in the soviet times highly influences the structure of his novels.

### **6.3. TRANSLATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS OF TOLSTOY'S WAR AND PEACE**

“*War and Peace*” by Leo Tolstoy is a novel that has been widely accepted across the globe. There are several translations of the work and the details of the authors are as given below:

- Clara Bell (from a French version) (1885–86)
- Nathan Haskell Dole (1898)
- Leo Wiener (1904)
- Constance Garnett (1904)
- Aylmer and Louise Maude (1922–3)
- Rosemary Edmonds (1957, revised 1978)
- Ann Dunnigan (1968)
- Anthony Briggs (2005)
- Andrew Bromfield (2007), translation of the first completed draft, apprx. 400 -pages shorter than other English translations
- Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (2007)
- Maude translation revised by Amy Mandelker, Oxford University Press (2010)

Of all these translations of *War and Peace*, Dunnigan's (1968) is the best....Unlike the other translators, Dunnigan even succeeds with many characteristically Russian folk expressions and proverbs....She is faithful to the text and does not hesitate to render conscientiously those details that the uninitiated may find bewildering: for instance,

the statement that Boris's mother pronounced his name with a stress on an indication to the Russian reader of the old lady's affectation".

On the Garnett translation Pavlovskis-Petit writes: "her...War and Peace is frequently inexact and contains too many anglicisms. Her style is awkward and turgid, very unsuitable for Tolstoy." On the Maudes' translation she comments: "this should have been the best translation, but the Maudes' lack of adroitness in dealing with Russian folk idiom, and their style in general, place this version below Dunnigan's." She further comments on Edmonds's revised translation, formerly on Penguin: "[it] is the work of a sound scholar but not the best possible translator; it frequently lacks resourcefulness and imagination in its use of English....a respectable translation but not on the level of Dunnigan or Maude."<sup>221</sup>

### **6.3.1. FILM ADAPTATIONS**

The first Russian adaptation was *война и мир* (*voyna i mir*) in 1915, which was directed by Vladimir Gardin and had the grand starcast of Gardin and the Russian ballerina Vera Karalli. F.Kamei produced a version of the movie in Japan in the year 1947. The 208-minute long American 1956 version was directed by King Vidor and starred Audrey Hepburn as Natasha, Henry Fonda as Pierre and Mel Ferrer as Andrei. The critically acclaimed Soviet version by the director Sergei Bondarchuk was released in four parts in 1966 and 1967. It starred Lyudmila Savelyeva as Natasha Rostova and Vyacheslav Tikhonov as Andrei Bolkonsky. Bondarchuk himself played the character of Pierre Bezukhov.<sup>222</sup>

### **6.3.2. TELEVISION**

The British Broadcasting Corporation made a television series based on the novel, which was broadcasted in 1972–73. Anthony Hopkins played the lead role of Pierre. Other lead characters were played by Rupert Davies, Faith Brook, Morag Hood, Alan Dobie, Angela Down and Sylvester Morand.<sup>223</sup>

French TV also had a production of Prokofiev's opera War and Peace, directed by François Roussillon. Robert Brubaker played the lead role of Pierre.<sup>224</sup>

War and Peace was produced by the Italian Lux Vide, a TV mini-series in Russian & English co-produced in Russia, France, Germany, Poland and Italy in the year 2007.

On 18 February 2013, the BBC announced plans for a six-part adaptation of the novel to be scripted by Andrew Davies and to be aired on BBC One in 2015.<sup>225</sup>

### **6.3.3. OPERA**

Initiated by a proposal of the German director Erwin Piscator in 1938, the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev composed his opera War and Peace based on this epic novel during the 1940s. The complete musical work premiered in Leningrad in 1955. It was the first opera to be given a public performance at the Sydney Opera House (1973).<sup>226</sup>

### **6.3.4. THEATRE**

The first successful stage adaptations of War and Peace were produced by Alfred Neumann and Erwin Piscator (1942, revised 1955, published by Macgibbon & Kee in London 1963, and staged in 16 countries since) and R. Lucas (1943).

A stage adaptation by Helen Edmundson, first produced in 1996 at the Royal National Theatre, was published that year by Nick Hern Books, London. Edmundson added to and amended the play for a 2008 production as two 3-hour parts by Shared Experience, directed by Nancy Meckler and Polly Teale. This was first put on at the Nottingham Playhouse, and then toured in the UK to Liverpool, Darlington, Bath, Warwick, Oxford, Truro, London (the Hampstead Theatre) and Cheltenham.

A musical adaptation by OBIE Award-winner Dave Malloy, called Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812 premiered at the Ars Nova Theater in Manhattan on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012. The show is described as an electropop opera, and is based on Book 8 of War and Peace, focusing on Natasha's affair with Anatole.<sup>227</sup>

### 6.3.5. RADIO

The BBC Home Service broadcast an eight-part adaptation by Walter Peacock from 17 January to 7 February 1943 with two episodes on each Sunday. All but the last instalment, which ran for one and a half hours, were one hour long. Leslie Banks played Pierre while Celia Johnson was Natasha. In December 1970, Pacifica Radio station WBAI broadcast a reading of the entire novel (the 1968 Dunnigan translation) read by over 140 celebrities and ordinary people. A dramatised full-cast adaptation in ten parts was written by Marcy Kahan and Mike Walker in 1997 for BBC Radio 4. The production won the 1998 Talkie award for Best Drama and was around 9.5 hours in length. It was directed by Janet Whitaker and featured Simon Russell Beale, Gerard Murphy, Richard Johnson, and others.<sup>228</sup>

## **6.4. TRANSLATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS OF MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV'S AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON**

The novel has been adapted for the screen three times: a 1931 film by Ivan Pravov and Olga Preobrazhenskaya; a second, 1958 adaption was directed by Sergei Gerasimov and starred Elina Bystritskaya and Pyotr Glebov. In 1992–1993 a remake was directed by Sergei Bondarchuk (starring Rupert Everett); the film was not finished until 2006, when Fyodor Bondarchuk completed the editing, and was shown on Russian television as a seven-part miniseries, followed by a worldwide DVD release: ...and Quiet Flows the Don. Ivan Dzerzhinsky based his opera Quiet Flows the Don (Tikhiy Don) on the novel, with the libretto adapted by his brother Leonid. Premiered in October 1935, it became wildly popular after Stalin saw and praised it a few months later. The opera was proclaimed a model of socialist realism in music and won Dzerzhinsky a Stalin Prize.<sup>229</sup>

The lyrics for the folk song "*Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*" by Pete Seeger and Joe Hickerson were adapted from a cossack folk song mentioned in And Quiet Flows the Don.<sup>230</sup>

## **6.5. CONCLUSION**

“*War and Peace*” and “*And quiet flows the Don*” are two beautifully crafted novels by the greatest Russian authors of all times. A lot many themes are extracted from the novels and all of those have already been discussed above. The “Woman question” is aptly discussed across the length and breadth of these works. The most important difference between the women characters of both works is that in Tolstoy’s work we have amidst us, aristocratic sophisticated women who have all the privileges in life. While Sholokhov talks about very common and unrefined women. Although

there are changes and differences brought about due to their upbringing and their environment, women are in general found to have the same kind of feelings in terms of love and life. Women in general have this need to be loved to their heart's full. As elsewhere there are different kinds of women. Some are by birth disposed to good and good only and hence have a gentle and loving disposition as Princess Marya Bolkonsky. There are others who are confused regarding what they themselves want from life as is the case with Natasha Rostova who goes through life's trials by making wrong choices in crucial junctures. However, given certain situations she flies up above these faults and reaches a high stature in life and thus ends up as the leading lady in an epic as grand as "*War and Peace*". In this very society we also meet the likes of Helene Kuragin who is always neck deep in adultery, infidelity and deceit and never really makes an attempt to reform her ways and finally death finds its way to her.

Transported to an entirely different world to the natural setting of the valley of the river Don, we find another league of women. Aksinia who is the leading women in the novel is shown as someone who is very confident and headstrong. She never gets happiness in life and finally finds it in her handsome young neighbour Grigory, who reciprocates the love. Set against the backdrop of the war, Aksinia fights till the end for her true love and her rival is the second most important women in the story, the love forsaken poor and innocent Natalya whose entire world revolves around her husband Grigory. Here we see love of two kinds of love. The wild and passionate type that engulfs everything around it and the calm and sorrowfull kind that never really reaches fulfillment despite a distant hope for it.

Tolstoy judges his ladies and their ultimate destiny is based on his concept of morality. Sholokhov however has utmost sympathy for his characters and the end they

get is based on the cruel and harsh fate. With the war raging in the background. The lives of the characters are all changed for the worse and almost all of them perish.

For the purpose of the successful completion of the thesis, a lot of study has been made and secondary data has been made very good use of. Despite this a limitation that needs to be pointed out is that no constitutional provisions were available for safeguarding the rights of women in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In Tsarist Russia women held a very low social status and could marry and bear children. Law and social traditions kept them inferior to men and they could not even avail higher education. Sophia Kovalevskaya, a world renowned mathematician could not get a job in Tsarist Russia during 1859 to 1861, serfdom collapsed, the women's movement in Russia arose as apart of the Russian social movement. A negligible number of women worked in heavy industries and women were paid half the wages. The working time was about ten hours and there were no safety measures for them. Women could never get the centre stage due to this factor and were subject to exploitation in many forms. Many of them were forced into prostitution. To make both ends meet. Young women attended courses at the University of St. Petersburg (1862-64) and the Academy of Medicine and Surgery (1862-64). Higher education for women in Russia began with the starting of V.I.Ger'e higher courses for women in Moscow (1872) and the Bestuzhev Higher Courses for women in St.Petersburg (1879). Tolstoy's *novel* is set in this backdrop. However the women Natasha, Marya and Helene are members of the aristocracy and hence do not have to face such oppression. Their lives are free from such problems.

Natasha's vivaciousness and exuberance is aptly captured in the novel. Marya's pious outlook is what enraptures the author himself and hence raises her

much above the league of the other leading ladies of the novel. Helene is the bad example that he presents before the readers. There is a true element in thesis characters and they are people whom he has already been associated with in his life time. Tolstoy's women characters evelove over the years and finally only the likes of Natasha and Marya survive, while Helene dies.

*“And quiet flows the Don”* is set between the years 1925-1940. During this time the conditions of women increased substantially. The October revolution of 1917 established equality of men and women before law. The constitution gave women the right to clect and to be elected to all organs of the state power. Working women could take part in the social life of the country and in the administration of the state. They participated in the liberation struggle of the working class. Peasant women, working women and workers' wives took part in the revolutionary movement of 1904-1905. Numerous other legal provisions were also in favour of women. However this kind of freedom does not seem to have reached the women characters of the Cossack community in *“And quiet flows the Don”*.

Aksinia and Natalya are simple hardworking Cossack women for whom their families and love are way above anything else in the world. Both are united by a common thread. Both are completely involved in their passion and feelings of the heart. Aksinia is a representative of the rebellion that women were participating in in the cities. Natalya is the morose and gloomy self pitying woman character that does not really get her heart's full. Sholokhov gives a lot of importance to his woman characters and gives a lot of depth to them. He does not attach any moral tags to them.they are given complete freedom to follow what they feel like. The end meted out to them is based on the concept that fate rules over human lives.

Spanning across cultures, these women face similar situations many a times but at crucial junctures in life they are forced to take decisions and it is these decisions that spearhead their lives.

Although times have changed the attitude of the male dominated society is unchanged with respect to the question of woman emancipation. However Tolstoy and Sholokhov's women characters are very bold and strong. Their presence in Russian literature is definitely something that enhances its literary value.