

Sadism in Ben Jonson's "Volpone"

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Abstract- *Man is the worst enemy to none but himself. He mostly likes other human beings to suffer, pine and languish. This has universally been recognized as the root cause of human sufferings in the history of civilization. This paper attempts to recommend a malice-free good society based on mutual understanding and esteem by stimulating the conscience of all concerned about how detrimental and fatal it may be to derive amusement in others' pain. In Ben Jonson's Volpone, the protagonist, Volpone, a Venetian clarissimo finds pleasure in tyrannizing his greedy, legacy-hunting neighbours, Voltore, Corbaccio, Corvino and others, which is a universal theme in literature as well as human society. While pursuing material gains like social positions, power, money and elements of luxury, a human being generally does not hesitate to usurp his fellow human beings' interests and rights although he lives in the society with a pretentious smiling face and feigning courtesy with those living around him. This corresponds to Volpone's disguise. Volpone is a typical figure perpetrating all sorts of mischiefs in which Mosca, his parasite, works as a key accomplice. Eventually Volpone, Mosca and the greedy neighbours are brought home to rigorous punishment. It proves that sins never go unpunished. This article attempts to rouse awareness regarding sin and its ultimate consequences in the minds of the readers and may largely contribute to our social well-being.*

Keywords: *Human avarice, sadism, enjoyment of torment, and well-being of human society.*

I. Introduction

Ben Jonson's motivation in touching on sadism that implies pleasure accruing from others' misery probably dates back to the ancient time when the first man, Adam, the father of mankind, was created by God in the Paradise. Satan's stratagem and contrivance result in Man's catastrophic fall from Heaven, thereby bringing about his unbounded contentment. He also seems to be inspired by Thomas More's *Utopia* where he presents the satisfaction of the European capitalistic society founded on megalomania and bias. Belonging to the aristocratic class, the young, handsome protagonist, Volpone, in Ben Jonson's, *Volpone*, agonizes his legacy-hunting neighbours who deem him to be an old dying man. His capital objective is to get thrilled beside materialistic gain. Volpone feigns to be an old, invalid and dying man so that his suitors may compete with one another to be inherited following his death. Sadism in *Volpone* stands for the elation originating from torture on the part of the upper class in Europe upon the poor. Thus Ben Jonson has made a scathing attack upon the then capitalistic milieu. Volpone makes others suffer not basically for material gain but mostly for enjoyment. This careless, beastly enjoyment also lies palpable in the minor characters like Perigreen and Sir Politic Wouldbe. Perigreen,

too, light-heartedly enjoys Sir Pol's petty suffering. Again, Mosca, the parasite tries to blackmail his master while a chance appears to him. At last, Volpone, finding no other alternatives, exposes himself and inflicts pain and punishment upon himself. So, alongside other substantial themes, in *Volpone*, happiness through torturing others, as a universal theme, stands out.

II. Ben Jonson's Inspiration

In dealing with such a theme as sadism signifying finding gladness in persecuting others, Ben Jonson most possibly got inspired from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Thrown in hell, Satan lies frustrated and tries to derive pleasure by hating mankind:

Thoughts, whither have ye led me! with what sweet
Compulsion thus transported, to forget
What hither brought us! hate, not love; nor hope
Of Paradise for Hell, hope here to taste
Of pleasure; but all pleasure to destroy,
Save what is in destroying; other joy
To me is lost. (Martin, 1915, p. 254. ix, 73-79)

In the lines above, Satan soliloquies about his conspiracy against mankind, the posterity of Adam and Eve, who were made suffer through their expulsion out of Heaven, thereby providing pleasures with Satan. In fact, Volpone's delight of afflicting pain upon his neighbours seems to be universally satanic. Exasperated and dissatisfied with Volpone's beastly treatment, Mosca in his final statement cursed his master, Volpone, by picturing his true temperament, which is reflected in the conversation between the first judge, Volpone and Mosca. As Volpone vents his exuberance at the judge's pronouncement of punishment to Mosca, the latter parallels his master to a wolf:

1ST AVOCATORE: For which our sentence is, first,
thou (Mosca) be whipt;

Then live perpetual prisoner in our gallies.

VOLPONE: I thank you for him.

MOSCA: Bane to thy wolfish nature! (Watson, 2014, p. 167 V, xii, 113-114).

Like a wolf, Volpone tyrannizes the scapegoats, his legacy hunting neighbors, keeping them alive. *Volpone* is, in fact, a play of man's wolfish coercion to have gratification in getting others anguished and agonized. In an assessment, David Riggs remarks judiciously: "The sole purpose of Volpone's device is to inflict pain on his former clients" (Riggs, 1989, pp. 138-139). Another critic comments in the same vein and terms Volpone's tantalization of the covetous neighbours as "perversion as well as cruel and destructive skills" (Mile, 1990, p. 110). Ben Jonson might have been enthused regarding such theme of sadism from Sir Thomas More, an English Catholic humanist, who continues critiquing the European capitalist society for its pride and injustice, addressing them as *superbia* in his world-famous

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cerebral treatise, *Utopia*, where pride represents its sadistic pleasure:

"Her (Pride's) happiness shines brightly only in comparison to others' misery, and their poverty binds them and hurts them the more as her wealth is displayed." (Ogden, 1949, p. 81).

To him, aged capitalistic culture appears more and more "a conspiracy of the rich, who pursue their own aggrandizement under the name and title of the Commonwealth." (Ogden, 1949, p. 8). In effect, an unquenchable desire, exists in the core of human pride discovering contentment simply in others' wretchedness. As a successor, Ben Jonson satirizes the Renaissance society. Both More and Jonson as social reformers like to demonstrate the grounds of societal disquiet lying in the fitfulness and caprice of human beings. The cause does not lie in our destiny, but in our wolfish temperament.

III. Volpone's Camouflage of Decease to Pester the Legacy Hunters

As Voltore, the eloquent advocate, table a distorted document to the judges concerning Bonario's adultery with Celia, the jury is convinced as to the crime of the attempted murder on behalf of Bonario. Finally the jury resolves to sentence two innocent characters, Celia and Bonario, and consequently they are sent to custody. Volpone and Mosca feel jubilant at their achieved victory. Victorious and adamant, Volpone wants to celebrate the occasion by teasing the avaricious inheritance seekers. In this connection, Boas states that "intoxicated with his success Volpone hits on a new stratagem to trick his dupes by spreading a report that he has died. When they come flying to peck for carrion they find Mosca deaf to all else while he makes an inventory of his master's treasures and finally shows to the discomfited rivals a will in which he is named sole heir" (Boas, 1946, p. 109). He orders Mosca and Nano to declare that their master has breathed his last on account of the recent slander:

Straight give out about the streets, you two,
That I am dead : do it with constancy. (Abrams, 1993, p. 1198 V, ii, 60-61)

He also keeps his target clear that the clients' harassment will result in his contentment:

O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter!
(Procter, 1989, p. 262, V, ii, 87)

Even Mosca knows the degree to which the legacy hunters will be agonized:

Mosca: Your advocate will turn stark dull upon it.
Volpone: It will take off his oratory's edge.
Mosca: But your clarissimo, old round-back, he
Will crump you like a hog louse with the touch.
Volpone: And what Corvino?
Mosca: O, sir, look for him.
Tomorrow Morning with a rope and dagger
To visit all the streets: he must run mad. (Procter, 1989, p. 262, V, ii, 88-95)

Indeed, Volpone dissembles to die and ostensibly leaves his sycophant as his legatee so as to watch and, afterwards, to maltreat the disillusioned bequest huntsmen.

IV. Ben Jonson's Vigorous Assault against the Contemporary Materialistic Society

Volpone's metamorphosis from a man to a wolf largely contributes to his ecstasy in inflicting pain upon his covetous neighbours. This is symbolic of the "portrait of the cruelties that other men commit for their pursuit of gain, the 'melting heirs' and 'fathers of poor families' who are exploited by conscienceless businessmen, and the widows and orphans who suffer as a consequence. Volpone and Mosca describe all this activity with a certain detachment and amusement. (Butler, 1987, p. 22)". Volpone's craving for the torment of his neighbours gushes to the fore in the fifth act, but Jonson imparts its insinuations from the very inauguration of the play. One may cast a look at the first scene which will mirror that Jonson cautiously constitutes the basis for the maturity of character portrayal palpable in the last act. Volpone's foremost, illustrious swank to Mosca stands apparent that he is stirred not by mere 'possession' but by 'cunning purchase' of material goods, thereby scorning the customary traditions of mere capitalistic overdoing and making a scathing attack against the society he is living in. Legouis rightly comments in this regard: "It is a violent attack on cupidity and mean avarice and Machiavellianism" (Legouis, 1965, p. 448). Concerning the peculiar mode of purchase, Volpone asserts:

I use no trade, no venture;
I wound no earth with ploughshares; fat no beasts
To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,
Oil, corn, or men, to grind 'em into powder.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1131, I, i, 34-37)

Jonson's brilliant satire stands out in the use of 'men' who were regularly ground into 'powder' through the exploitation and extortion exercised by the opulent class-conscious society; Jonson's parallel between human beings and inanimate commodities renders the suffocated dignity of man articulated to all concerned. In the vicissitudes of civilization, European acquisitive aristocracy not only dominates the proletariat but also inhumanely oppresses the people of the whole world by colonizing them brutally. This was a devastating characterization of early capitalism. Jonson condescends to evince us that Volpone's and Mosca's techniques are not superior to, but worse than the society's typical ways of purchase. Volpone's fondest 'sport' all along remains active to 'grind' men into powder. Mosca carries on in Volpone's style, pointing out:

No sir, [nor] ...
Tear forth the fathers of poor families
Out of their beds, and coffin them alive
In some clasping prison, where their bones
May be forthcoming, when the flesh is rotten.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1132, I, i, 40-47)

Mosca's depiction of jail-confinement also sounds pejorative of the approaches of society, as both Mosca and Volpone follow the path of beguiling parents and children, and husbands and wives; this is ironically self-derogatory, too; and, obviously, an ironic forewarning to their sentence in the end. Volpone explicates his tantalization of the 'birds of prey' when the first scene comes to an end. He clarifies that the pain and frustration upon his prey are far more substantial to him than gifts they bring him:

Letting the cherry knock against their lips,

And draw it by their mouths, and back again.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1133, I, i, 89-90)

Volpone, in fact, tantalizes the suitors with 'the cherry' implying inheritance succeeding his death and gets overjoyed as he succeeds in duping them by 'draw(ing) it by their mouths'.

V. Celia's Suffering More Important to Volpone than His Seduction of Her

Volpone and Mosca look upon the first trial scene as their 'masterpiece', for they have won against the accusation made by Bonario and Celia. Mosca categorically wants Volpone to congratulate him on the 'masterpiece' of misjustice and misprision of Bonario and Celia, which Mosca has already manipulated proficiently. Volpone's response to admire and praise his parasite goes simply tepid :

You are not taken (pleased) with it enough, methinks? (Abrams, 1993, p. 1196, V, ii, 9)

The rejoinder made by Volpone lies jubilantly spontaneous and disclosing:

O, more than if I had enjoyed the wench.

The pleasure of all womankind's not like it.
(Procter, 1989, p. 259, V, ii, 10-11)

Volpone exposes something significant as regards his own desire- the enjoyment of making or at least watching Celia suffer is more desirable than his seduction of her, whereas Celia is endowed with "unblemished chastity necessary to complement the black lust of the villain. (Bradbrook, 1960, p. 70)" This spiteful smudge in Volpone looms larger and larger as the plot goes ahead, and Jonson draws concentration to the rest of the drama. Jonson takes pains to prove that Volpone's luxurious and sensual efforts increasingly merges into brutal, satirical vein that is founded on the pleasure of others' twinge. The principal pattern and theme of the play factually and symbolically revolves round torment.

VI. Wolfish Gratification Stemming from the Brutal Treatment

Victorious and exhilarated in the first Scrutineo, which is considered as their 'masterpiece', Mosca and Volpone immediately acquiesce that Voltore, whose expertise as an advocate immensely contributes to their 'masterpiece', is an ostentatious donkey deserving to be tricked. Now, Volpone vows to misbehave with all:

At thy entreaty

I will begin e'en now to vex 'em all,

This very instant (Procter, 1989, p. 261, V, ii, 55-57).

Here, Volpone gets obsessed to vex all the clients. Volpone resolves that his first mechanism will be to act as if he were dead and that Mosca will be his beneficiary; the clients will appear at the scene and grow stunned, discovering themselves cozened and deceived, then Mosca will treat them roughly and harshly:

I'll get up

Behind the curtain, on a stool, and hearken;

Sometime peep over, see how they do look,

With what degree the blood doth leave their faces.

O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter! (Procter, 1989, p. 262, V, ii, 83-86)

Mosca, the accomplice, helps his master envisage the pleasantly hurting vista beforehand:

Mosca: Your advocate will turn dull upon it. ...

But your clarissimo, old round-back, he

Will crump you like a hog louse with the touch.

Volpone: And what Corvino?

Mosca: O, sir, look for him

Tomorrow morning with a rope and dagger

To visit all the streets; he must run mad. (Procter, 1989, p. 262, line-81-94)

Finally, Volpone draws attention to the sadistic motif:

Play the artificer now, [Mosca], torture 'em rarely.
(Procter, 1989, p. 263, V, ii, 106)

As gossip of Volpone's supposed death reaches the inheritance seekers, and while Volpone spies on them ecstatically from behind his curtain, Mosca tortures them, calmly making inventory of what they conceive are now their treasures until they read the will. Then, as they leave in anger and despair, Mosca upbraids each with a brutal reminder of their reprehensible sin. He reminds Lady Wouldbe of what her 'ladyship offered' him and counsels her:

Go, be melancholic. (Procter, 1989, p. 266, V, iii, 45)

Volpone cries out gleefully from behind the curtain:

O my fine devil!" (Abrams, 1993, p. 1201, V, iii 46)

When, subsequently, Corvino comes forward to speak, Mosca excoriates him:

Do not you know I know you an ass ...

A declared cuckold? (Procter, 1989, p. 266, V, iii, 50, 53)

Volpone yells in elation: (line 61),

Rare, Mosca! How his villainy becomes him!"
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1201, V, iii, 61)

Then Mosca ignores old Corbaccio, more sadistically, too:

Are not you he, that filthy, covetous wretch

With the three legs, that here, in hope of prey,

Have, any time this three year, snuffed about...?

Go home, and die, and stink. (Procter, 1989, p. 266, V, iii, 67-59)

Volpone justifies his slave:

Excellent varlet! (Procter, 1989, p. 267, V, iii, 72)

Nonetheless, Voltore is treated with a little bit less unkindness. Mosca tortures the lawyer with gentle words. Voltore is a talented man saving Mosca's and Volpone's lives, still, he confronts the meanest dealing. Voltore supposes that after the others' departure, Mosca will declare Voltore fit for Volpone's legacy. But the opposite happens; Mosca annihilates him with compassion:

Reverend sir! Good faith, I am grieved for you.

That any chance of mine should thus defeat

Your- I must say- most deserving travails. ...

Marry, my joy is that you need it not;

You have a gift, sir- thank your education- ...

Good faith, you look

As you were costive; best go home and purge, sir.

(Abrams, 1993, p. 1201, V, ii, 82-101)

Volpone can no longer contain himself. Coming from behind the curtain, Volpone gives vent to his bliss:

Bid him eat lettuce well!
My witty mischief,
Let me embrace thee.
O that I could now
Transform thee to a Venus-
Mosca, go Straight take my habit of clarissimo,
And walk the streets; be seen, torment'em more.
We must pursue as well as plot.
Who would Have lost this feast? (Abrams, 1993, p. 1202, V, iii, 102-108)

From the extract quoted above, the readers can comprehend that Volpone's mood switches from lust to the infliction of pain. Gradually carnal desire plunges into the passion of atrocity. Volpone's calling Mosca's torment of the disillusioned 'birds of prey' the 'feast' ("Who would / Have lost this feast?") corresponds to his earlier utterance as he, for the first time, speaks of his stratagem to Mosca to persecute suitors: "O, 'twill afford me a rare meal of laughter." Moreover, meal of laughter mirrors Volpone's expression in the inaugural soliloquy at the time of his pronouncement of the self-ascribed remedy for his malady to have 'violent laughter.' Volpone takes pleasure in his feast of laughter. Later on sadistic image becomes coherent, as when Volpone asserts that to beguile the legacy hunter is

better than rob churches yet
Or fat, by eating once a month a man, (Parker, 1983, p. 126, I, v, 91-92)

or when Volpone's fool Androgyno ironically characterizes a person belonging to Puritanism as an

illuminate brother,
Of those devour flesh, and sometimes one another
(Parker, 1983, p. 99, I.ii.43-44).

The operative words 'torture,' 'vex,' 'torment,' 'afflict,' and 'provoke' emphasize his fascination with others' distress and agony.

Volpone's language, here, implies a fusion of the cruelty with the sensual. He enjoys Mosca's sadistic conduct to the clients so largely that he now likes Mosca to change into a sexual object. In case of failure, more affliction may suffice:

Walk the streets; be seen; torment 'em more.
We must pursue. (Abrams, 1993, p. 1202, V, iii, 106-107)

That Volpone will be ever warm for Mosca for his cruelty is predicted towards the end of the first act as Volpone, excited by observing Mosca's cruel gulling of Corbaccio into disinheriting his son, leaps out of his sick bed to congratulate Mosca:

O, but thy working, and thy placing it!
I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kiss thee.
I never knew thee in so rare a humor. (Parker, 1983, p. 120, I.iv.136-38)

Afterwards, when Corvino forces his wife to go to bed with Volpone, he tells Mosca by whispering:

Thou art mine honor, and my pride!
My joy, my tickling, my delight. (Halio, 1968, p.74, III.vii.68-69).

Towards the beginning of the fifth act, the words in relation to sexual alteration are carried on and seem more piercing.

VII. Perigreen's Light-Hearted Torture on Sir Politic Wouldbe

Perigreen, an English traveler in Venice, torments Sir Politic Wouldbe so as to simply to frighten him without any intention of malevolence, which produces ludicrous effects and forecasts the key theme of pleasure in tormenting others in the core plot. The theme with regards to deliberate felony and consequent penalty in the subplot seems predictably to be compatible with the more staid concerns of the central plot. Perturbed with Sir Pol's ignorance, Perigreen reprimands him for enmeshing him in his bizarre plots. Unlike Mosca and Volpone, Peregrine does not intend to harm his dupe, Sir Pol, seriously. Though he is being urged by his assistants to 'prick' his 'guts', Peregrine proclaims that his purpose is merely to panic him. Nevertheless, the tone of his voice reminds the readers of the foremost plot; Peregrine tells Sir Pol that people have suspected him and hence they are coming to punish him. Sir Pol expresses his exclamation and says that he will never endure the affliction. He faces the challenge by entering, an engine, a tortoise shell, which he has designed. When Peregrine's collaborators poke Sir Pol 'to see him creep, to prick his guts,' Peregrine recommends them not to be too much hostile towards him:

"No, good sir, you will hurt him." (Watson, 2014, p. 146, V, iv, 69)

Sensible and sober, Peregrine does not appear interested to afflict or upset Sir Pol, rather, as a humourous reformer, he is very cordial in his 'instruction and amendment.' Counseling Sir Pol in his tortoise shell, he attempts to quiet his oppressors:

Pray you, sir!
Creep a little. (Watson, 2014, p. 146, V, iv, 72)

He mildly orders him to creep a little bit more and while the creeping comes to an end and the masquerade is brushed aside, Perigreen professes his parity with him:

Now, Sir Pol, we are even. (Watson, 2014, p. 146, V, iv, 75)

Accordingly Perigreen, too, is seen having lukewarm pleasure in torturing his fellow traveler.

VIII. Mosca's Torture upon His Master

That Volpone's death has been well circulated in Venice has initiated his catastrophe of being victimized by Mosca who has availed himself to be his heir since everybody knows Volpone to be dead. Mosca now feels awfully glad at Volpone's calamity. Mosca, who comes to know that the indiscreet Volpone has now placed himself into the trap, is baleful as he soliloquizes and fluctuates between his alternatives:

Since he will needs be dead before his time,
I'll bury him, or gain by him. I'm his heir,
And so will keep me, till he share at least.
To cozen him of all were but a cheat
Well placed; no man would construe it a sin.
Let his sport pay for't. This is called the fox trap.
(Abrams, 1206, p. 1382 V.v. 13-18)

It is now worthwhile for Mosca to persecute Volpone and to make him pine away, save Volpone's negotiation with him. In order to obtain the whole property possessed by Volpone, he is to eradicate the declared 'dead' Volpone. It is all the same whether Mosca engraves his former master or gains by him. However, Mosca is not now making any hurry to kill Volpone, because he has already been the heir to the long-expected property.

IX. Birds of Prey Degraded and Disappointed:

Frustrated and humiliated, the avaricious legacy hunters are tortured by Volpone himself. Volpone, now getting disguised as a commendatore in the court, mortifies each of the greedy neighbours one after another ironically applauding each for being entitled to late Volpone's inheritance. In consequence, Volpone comes across Corbaccio and Corvino, and desires him to have exultation:

Much joy ... (of) the sudden good
Dropped down upon you (him)" (Abrams, 1993, p. 1207, V,vi, 8-11).

But being incensed, Corbaccio could sense its gravity:

Dost thou mock me? (Watson, 2014, p. 144, V, v, 14)

At this, Volpone hits upon the reality:

You mock the world, sir; did you not [ex]change wills? (Watson, 2014, p. 144, V, v, 15)

Corbaccio's realization goes more acute:

Out, harlot! (Watson, 2014, p. 144, V, v 16)

In the meantime, Volpone makes fun of Corvino:

O! Belike you are the man,
Senior Corvino? (Watson, 2014, p. 144, V, v, 17)

Volpone further insults him:

Troth, your wife has shown
Herself a very woman!
(Watson, 2014, p. 144, V, v, 20-21)

At last, Volpone vexes Voltore under cover of congratulation :

I e'n rejoice, sir, at your worship's happiness,
And that it fell into so learned hands,
That understand the fingerings-
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1208, V, vii, 4-6)

Failing to withstand the affront, Voltore, too, gets exasperated:

Mistaking knave! What, mock'st thou my
misfortune?
(Watson, 2014, p. 146, V, v, 21)

After Voltore's departure, Volpone designs to replicate the whole excruciating course later on.

Afterwards, Volpone dissembles to notice that Mosca becomes heir to his master's legacy and torments the clients again; he satirizes Corbaccio:

I'm heartily grieved a beard of your grave length
Should be so overreached.
(Watson, 2014, p. 147-148, V, viii, 5-6)

Corvino is next abused by Volpone. Volpone remains interested in getting his 'feast' of vindictive laughter, and he reminds his 'crow' that he has dropped his 'cheese' and that 'the Fox' is laughing eventually. Corvino is ready to assault him physically as Mosca comes to the spot, and Corbaccio and Corvino leave the scene. By addressing Mosca as 'Excellent basilisk', Volpone inspires him to scorn Voltore. Mosca exits after exchanging abuses with Voltore

who continues to sting Voltore with ironic condolences for the swindle Mosca exerts upon him:

I hope you do but jest. (Watson, 2014, p. 147, V, viii, 13)

Voltore, at last, appears as dispirited and perturbed as Volpone could wish him to be:

A strange, officious,
Troublesome knave! Thou dost torment me.
(Parker, 1983, p. 276, V, ix, 15-16)

Volpone does not pay heed to his words; on the other hand, he persists whispering confidentially to Voltore:

I know-
It cannot be, sir, that you should be cozened;
Tis not within the wit of man to do it.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1210, V, ix, 16-17)

These words mark Volpone's sadistic game to its pinnacle.

X. Volpone's Mischieves to Himself and Didactic Instructions

Although angry Voltore is managed in his favour by Volpone, Mosca goes unruly; as a result, Volpone fails to persuade him. Finding no other alternative, Mosca's master resolves to come out of disguise. He is on the horns of a dilemma. If, on the one hand, he remains disguised, he will be deprived of his own property and accordingly he will stay disgracefully humiliated at the hand of his base servant for ever; on the other hand if he exposes his mask, he is likely to embrace rigorous penalty by the court. Frustrating his master, Mosca tells a lie about him:

I sooner had attended your grave pleasures
But that my order for the funeral
Of my dear patron did require me- ...
Whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.
(Parker, 1983, p. 286, V, xii, 56-60)

Instantly Volpone reacts despondently:

Ay, quick, and scozen me of all.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1214, V, xii, 59)

When Volpone proposes half of his property to Mosca, the latter pretends not to know the former:

Whose drunkard is this same? Speak, some that
know him:
I never saw his face. (Abrams, 1993, p. 1214, V, xii, 68)

Volpone makes a last emotional outburst to be rescued, his cry goes unheeded:

Will thou betray me?
Cozen me? (Abrams, 1993, p. 1215, V, xii, 81-82)

Before disclosing his own identity possibly he confronts another shock of Mosca's tentative matrimony with the fourth judge's daughter:

4th AVOCATORE [to MOSCA]: Sir, are you
married?
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1215, V, xii, 83)

At length, Volpone decides to ruin himself along with Mosca:

Nay, now
My ruins shall not come alone; your match
I'll hinder sure: my substance shall not glue you
Nor screw you into a family. (Abrams, 1993, p. 1215,V, xii, 85-88)

Now Volpone divulges himself from his mask, thereby inflicting everlasting pain upon himself as well as his servant Mosca:

I am Volpone, and this [pointing to Mosca] is my knave. ... (Abrams, 1993, p. 1215,V, xii 89)

Both of them are appropriately penalized, as Daiches' universal remarks go:

Selfishness and cruelty bring their inevitable punishment. (Daiches, 1960, vol. ii, p. 339)"

Making the glorification of his failure, Volpone now tries to put forward a philosophical proposition:

And reverend fathers since we all can hope
Naught but a sentence, let's not now despair it.
(Abrams, 1993, p. 1215,V, xii 92-93)

Through this self-solace, sadistic treatment of characters reaches the degree of its zenith where both Volpone and Mosca entail woe upon each other and themselves.

XI. Conclusion

Living in a society replete with oppression and class-distinction, Ben Jonson attempts to awaken the conscience of the inmates of our society, by graphically drawing pictures of both the sadists and the victims of sadism in his epoch-making play, *Volpone*. His preoccupation with suffering and anguish that generate the feelings of enjoyment to avaricious, opulent section of the society takes after Milton's obsession with Satan's pleasure springing from Adam's fall from the Garden of Eden. Ben Jonson is supposed to be motivated by Thomas More who criticizes the European aristocracy of capitalism that leaves its adherents portentous and arrogant. Volpone, a rich Venetian bachelor, feels terribly interested in tormenting his greedy well-wishers frequenting his house in greed of legacy since they assume him to be an old dying man. He wants to gain two ends at a time, gold and sadistic gratification with the latter predominating. Sadism in *Volpone* symbolizes oppression on behalf of the privileged class upon the under-privileged one. This is how Jonson satirizes the contemporary capitalistic society. Volpone accumulates gold in a fraudulent way, but his principal motive is to get contented by making them suffer tremendously. The minor characters, such as Mosca, Perigreen and Sir Politic Would be, are also affected with this base human attribute. Perigreen enjoys Sir Pol's witty suffering. Mosca, the parasite, too, tries to plague his master when everybody believes dying Volpone to be dead. At the

prospect of Mosca's being the master of his inheritance and his probable marriage with the 4th Judge's daughter, Volpone, feels mortified and defeated at his servant's hand; he then comes out of disguise and as such invokes imprisonment and catastrophe upon his own providence.

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