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CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Special English
Discipline Specific Elective
Semester V (Paper IX) (DSE - E13) &
Semester VI (Paper XIV) (DSE - E138)

English Drama

(Academic Year 2021-22 onwards)

For

B. A. Part III

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Students,

This textbook is prepared keeping in mind that you are distant learners. This course book is organized in such a way to help you study it on your own.

We hope that this book containing the Self-Instructional Material on Semester V and VI is basically learner-centered and will surely meet the needs of our dear students offering English as their special subject at B. A. Part-III. The material is designed and presented in such a way that it will encourage the students to read and enjoy the units independently. The Module writers have tried their best to present the relevant material in a simple manner, expressed in lucid, clear and easy but dignified language. You will find this book innovative in its approach, method and technique.

The course book offers the students opportunities for remediation, consolidation and extension of the language already learnt.

Each module is divided into sub-sections and at the end of each section, there are small tasks. You are expected to write answers on your own. Though at the end of every module, answers are given, do not look at them until you have written your own answers.

You are expected to read each sub-sections, answer the questions given in the tasks, check your answers and then go ahead. If you do this sincerely and honestly, it is hoped you will enjoy bright success.

We wish you great success.

– **Editors**

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Each Unit begins with the section Objectives -

Objectives are directive and indicative of :

1. What has been presented in the Unit and
2. What is expected from you
3. What you are expected to know pertaining to the specific Unit once you have completed working on the Unit.

The self-check exercises with possible answers will help you to understand the Unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answers only after you write your answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as Study Tools to help keep you in the right track as you study the Unit.

Module I

A) Definition and Elements of Drama

Content

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
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 - 1.2.1 Definition of Drama
 - 1.2.2 The Origin of Drama
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- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Glossary and Notes
- 1.5 Check Your Progress
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- 1.7 Answers to check your Progress

1.0 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able:

- * To understand and identify drama as a genre of literature.
- * To learn the definitions of drama
- * To explain the difference between drama and other forms of literature
- * To explain the basic elements of drama
- * To understand the types of drama
- * To explain the origin of drama

1.1 Introduction

In this first module, you are going to learn some definitions of drama which are composed by eminent scholars and theatre Critics in their own understanding and different perspectives. Defining the term 'drama' in one line is too much difficult task as it has many layers of meanings. It is said to have that Drama is one of the second oldest forms of literature after Poetry that includes the serious literary mode. We all know there are number of different branches of literature such as poetry, novel, and the short story of drama differs from these literary genres. When we say drama as a genre of literature, it has broaden scope than the other forms and its antiquity which has evolved from the ancient period. Over the centuries, drama has been celebrated and appreciated because of its influential and effective means of representation of human sensibility and experience. The primary aim of literature is to give pleasure and to entertain, those who voluntarily go through it. Definitely, drama fulfills the urge of receiving pleasure and entertainment at a time. Entertainment is nevertheless one of the ostensible objectives of drama.

The word 'drama' has its origin from Greek. It is originated from the word 'dra' meaning 'do' or 'thing done'. 'Doing' means 'action' of presentation. So 'doing' and 'action' is the column beam of the whole dramatic premise. It is composed to be performance and enacted on the stage. It is specially, designed for representation on the stage by actors. So drama doesn't remain as solely a form of literature but it is projected as audio-visual art. It is also considered as representational art. Knowing its uniqueness and diverse dimensions, W. B. Yeats, an Irish dramatist, felt drama is the epitome and the mother of all arts that attracts a lot to everyone because it is 'an art upon all the arts'. Aristotle, an authoritative voice in the field of drama, has emphatically stressed on a component of drama - 'action' which imitates from the real life situation. That is why 'action' and 'dialogue' receive paramount significance in drama performances. Rice Elmer thinks that the essence of drama is not words but is 'action'. Though there are a few plays for reading which are referred as a 'closest dramas', but the real success of any play rely on its live performance on the stage. There is a close intimacy between drama and theatre. Really, it is difficult to separate drama from performance because during the stage performance of a play, drama brings life experiences realistically to the audience. Therefore, drama form is realized in performance which is why Robert Di Yanni (qtd. in Dukore) described it as 'staged art'. To get concrete impact of a play, dramatist has to get tested it on the stage. In

this regard, R. K. Dhawan states that a playwright needs a living theatre to put his work as an 'acid test' to evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance.

By curtailing the focus on the other literary genres, we have to concentrate on how drama genre is intimated with the physical aspects of performance wherein it takes place is called 'theatre'. The word 'theatre' in its narrow sense, means a 'place for the performance of plays', literally of seeing place. Elam Douglas Keir, Professor of English Literature, distinguishes between 'theater and drama' as two associated terrains. He feels that 'theatre' is customarily associated with the performance aspects of a work and 'drama' with its traditional narrative forms. Lastly, the question is asked about who is dramatist. The word 'dramatist' is used for any artist who is involved in any dramatic composition either in writing or in performance. The word 'drama', 'theater' and 'dramatist' are closely associated with each other permanently and no one can study these concepts separately. It means a play does not come into being unit, it is performed upon a stage in a theater in collaboration with many 'theatre-makers': a playwright, actors, directors and conscious spectators. Therefore, William Worsford, a historian, says that Drama is a composite art in which the author, the actor and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect. They are all inter- dependent caretaker of performance.

1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

1.2.1 Definition of Drama

What is drama?

The above introductory part of drama, gives a little glimpse of dramatic literature; but it doesn't display total impression about what is meant by 'drama' as an artistic form. To define 'drama' in a concrete base, it's very difficult, comparing to other forms of literature. Many theatre scholars and critics have attempted to define drama in their own understanding and perspectives.

Generally, drama is defined as an imitation of life, which implies a message through communication to the audience. Actors convey this message. Martin Esslin, British dramatist, opines that drama is an enacted fiction, an art form based on mimetic action. Dramatist uses his characters as a vehicle to convey his thoughts and

values. In poetry and novel, the author conveys his message directly to readers. In this regard, drama stands a unique phenomenon comparing to other literary genres.

Definitions

- 1) "Drama is a composition designed for performance in theatre in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue."

- A Glossary of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams.

- 2) "Drama - A form of literature intended for theatrical performance and written as prose or verse dialogue, a performance of this kind, anything in life that has similar attributes, such as confrontation, social tension, and great loss or great joy".

- The Oxford Companion to the English Language: edited by Tom Mearthur. Oup. New York, 1992, page 324.

- 3) "A composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue or pantomime a story involving conflict or contrast of character esp, one intended to be acted on the stage: a play".

- The Randam House Dictionary of the English Language - Laurence Urdang and Staurt Berg Flexner. APL, 1974, page 401.

- 4) "A Composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell story through action and dialogue and designed for theatrical performance: a play".

- "Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary: a MerriamWebsters", Scientific Book Agency, Calcutta, India 1969, page 253.

- 5) "Drama - a story of life and action for representation by actors, a composition intended to be represented on the stage: dramatic literature: theatrical entertainment".

- "Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary: William Geddie". Allied Publisher, New Delhi, 1971, page 319.

- 6) "A literary Composition to be performed upon the stage -a play".
- "The New International Webster's Students Dictionary : of the English Language" - edited by Sidney. I Landau. CBS. Publisher and Distributors, New Delhi - 2001, page 215.
- 7) "Drama - A term applied loosely to the whole body of work written for the theatre, the term 'dramatist' is not necessarily restricted to a writer of such dramas but serves like playwright, to designate anyone writing for the theatre".
- The concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre edited by Phyllis Hartnoll. OUP New York 1972 (143)
- 8) "..... the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions which occur literally and physically on the stage".
- Marjorie Boulton "The Anatomy of Drama".

The close study of above diverse definitions of drama lay certain features that can be studied in its broad length, considering many aspects of the composition of drama.

1) Like other literary genres, drama is not merely written activity but is an act of deliberate composition in either verse or prose form. Most of the playwrights from medieval period to the modern age, have chosen prose writing method to compose plays. But there was some period in English Literature which boosted playwrights to write their plays in verse form. University wits of Elizabethan Era had written plays in poetic forms. Almost all plays of Shakespeare are composed in verse as a medium of communication. In the first half of twentieth century, there was the revival of poetic drama. The plays of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot are fine examples of drama in poetry.

2) Another peculiar feature of drama is meant for theatrical performance. The main intention of writing plays is to perform a life story of any character in the theatre with the help of action and dialogue that presents inner conflict, contrast and emotion of the character. But actor is confined to what the dramatist has written and intended them to convey. The actor has to perform with the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. It means actor is confined with his action and if he fails in it, the purpose of the play is failed to achieve success of the performance.

3) One of the common features of all definitions of drama is that it represents a story of life of character with accompanying gestures, costume and scenery as in real life. The definition of shorter Oxford English Dictionary stresses more on that dramatist as he makes real life story of character through his action - through gesture, language, costume and scenery. These are the external devices of a play. We all know drama is an audio-visual theatrical performance; it is to be seen in the form of performance on the stage. With all these dramatic devices, playwright enables to create a proper atmosphere in the play and adds the visual effect on the stage. Marjorie Boulton, British author, is right in her definition regarding the physical aspects of Play that includes sights, sounds, costumes and action through which dramatist achieves success in representing the audio-visual effect; knowing the pulse of his spectators. The definition of Chambers 20th century Dictionary, gives emphasis on the total effect of the play that creates on the spectator.

4) The other definitions extend the scope of drama by saying that drama is not a mere tool of representation of life, characters and performance through action and dialogue. The main purpose of drama is to entertain the audience. Everyone agrees that entertainment is nevertheless one of the ostensible objectives of drama. Spectator goes to theatre to get amused entertaining and relaxation from their highly loaded domestic chores and hardships. John Dryden, British author's definition highlights more on other aspects of drama that widens the scope, and purpose of plays regarding its entertaining quality. He feels that a play as a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passion and humours and the change of fortune to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind. Dryden states that the ultimate objective of a play should be forgiving the delight and some indirect instructions to be rendered through the subject matter of play. It means that drama should not be a mere measured tool of arousing pity and fear among the spectators, at all time.

As drama is a serious kind of literary mode, dramatist has to take into account of the following parameters in composing play with utmost care:

- 1) Fictitious or real life presentation
- 2) Story
- 3) Characterization
- 4) Actor

- 5) Acting/imitation
- 6) Dialogue
- 7) Conflict
- 8) Language (light or serious)
- 9) Setting
- 10) Stage properties and equipment's such as scenery, sounds and light effects
- 11) Stage

The dramatist however has to work with a number of Collaborators, 'theatre maker's such as the audience, the actors the producers, the scene-painter, the costume designer, dress maker, the musician, and the electrician and so on. To create the total effect of the play, there needs collective efforts by all these theatre-makers through which audience would experience the life-like situation or it is very close to their life, condition.

1.2 The Origin of Drama

Scholars are divided while making discussion on the origin of drama in two groups. The first group traces the origin of the drama goes to Greece but the second group insists that drama in its definitive form or pattern evolved from Egypt which is one of the cradles of civilization in the world. However, the account of tracing the origin of drama to Greece is more possible. The evolution is clearer and well - documented.

The world theatre history deals with the debate that there is different opinion regarding the origin of drama whether it was started from Greek drama or from the Indian Ancient Sanskrit drama. Many theatre scholars are in the opinion of Greek drama is original form. They feel drama has commenced with religious celebration. Out of the various pagan rites and festival, there arose the earliest Western drama in the form of entertaining objectives. They opined that the plays were represented at the great festivals in honor of God, Dionysus, in different seasons and in the names Dionysia at Athens in Spring, the rural Dionysia held in Winter, and the Lenea also held in the winter. Aristotle in his 'poetics' claimed that the Greek tragedy arose from dithyrambs, a wild Choral hymn of ancient Greece, in the honor of the God Dionysus. The main purpose of these crude performances that were given for

praising the God. In course of time, the drama form matured by adding actors and characters and there evolved the drama as an independent form. The Greek tragedians like Aescylus, Sophocles and Euripide developed drama genre, wrote plays in verse form and consisting of scenes (episodes) and Choral songs, the heavy costumes, loosely hanging masks. The plays were performed in an open plain space surrounded by some hills, and plays were performed in broad day-light on the open-to-sky stage.

Indian drama is said to have purely of Indian origin. It is very curious matter about the origin of Indian drama. It is said that Brahma (a creator of universe) after the victory of the gods over their enemies - the Asuras - first composed a drama, taking the elements of recitation from the 'Rigveda', four kinds of acting or the art of mimicry from the 'Yajurveda', songs from the 'Samaveda' and emotions, passion and sentiments from the 'Athurveda', for Indian's satisfaction. Brahma composed a fifth Veda (Pancham Veda) and then taught it to the sage Bharata who learnt that kind of art and introduced it into the world at the command of his instructor, Brahma. And then it began to be known as the complete treatise on dramatic art and Indian Dramaturgy. He is known as the originator of the dramatic art; who formed the theory of drama. Bharatmuni expounded many aspects of drama such as what type of length of the stage should be there, how it should be there about the seating arrangement, the structure of rows and the structure of the entire building.etc.

Gradually, drama form evolved and matured in the early Elizabethan age with all sorts of physical theatricalities. In the real's sense of dramatic art, so many changes were brought on the stage. The place for performance was chosen either a hall or courts of inns or courts of the aristocrats. In course of time, the special theatres were built to perform the action on the stage, loaded with the seating arrangement and other theatre devices.

The early English dramas were developed from religious rituals basis on the occasion of birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and these play were enacted in the premises of Church by its priests. The subject matters of early English plays were of the incidents from Jesus Christ and other saints, and these plays were called Morality and Miracle plays. These plays were didactic and religious in nature and in its crude form plays were performed. But the artistic form of drama grew in the Elizabethan period with the hands of British writers like William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and

Christopher Marlowe. And the English drama reached at the highest point by the eminent playwrights in different ages.

1.2.3 Elements of drama

Theatre scholars have drawn some common elements of drama from diverse definitions that include: plot, character, dialogue, staging and theme. As already we have discussed that a drama, like a novel has plot, character, dialogue, setting and it also express an outlook on life, but it differs from novel genre in the handling of these essential features as a dramatic art. The drama form has specific elements that can not be ignored in the dramatic composition.

1. Plot: Plot is the central aspects of all dramas. A play is composed of a series of incidents or episodes which follow one after another. According to the plans of the dramatist, every incident is connected-often in a subtle way to incident which follows. When we talk about plot, we are talking about all of the various incidents in play and the ways in which those incidents connect. The story of a play evolves out of the plot of the play. So in that sense drama is primarily concerned with 'what happens' in it. Plot is basically another term of structure. Plot, we are more or less committed to discuss everything that happens in the play. In drama, every event is part of a carefully designed pattern and process.

Plot is thus an extremely artificial and complicated element which is wholly interconnected system of events, deliberately selected and arranged for the purpose of fulfilling a complex set of imaginative and theatrical purposes. Through such interconnected system of events, the playwright, with his artistic and construction skills, develops complications and suspense and leads in turn to a climax and crisis. The action takes a course in falling mode in a denouement section, wherein it unravels the complication and solution (in a comedy) or in catastrophe (in a tragedy) that decides the fate of its characters. These factors apply in both tragedy and comedy. If we accept, plot, as an extremely complicated element, one that can be understood only through a detailed analysis of dramatic unities. These three unities are the unities of time, place and action. Out of these three unities, unity of action is described by Aristotle in his book '*Poetics*' and other two unities are strictly covered by Shakespeare in his plays like '*The Comedy of Errors*' that completes within twelve hours, '*Othello*' that covers a period of a few days in the life of Othello and Desdemona. '*King Lear*' takes up a few months. Hamlet's long delay in carrying out

the Ghost's command takes many days. The Unity of place is said to have that it has no specific restriction to bind into the thread of common aspects. It varies from the line of stories that occurred: the palace, courtier's place, the garden, courts, an august hall, king's chamber and many other places.

It was a traditional presupposition that the subplot mars on the effect of the plot, but Shakespeare makes use of subplot without hampering on its total effect. In '*King Lear*' and '*Hamlet*', Shakespeare has used very strong subplot of the story of the *Earl of Gloucester and his two sons*, and the subplot of Laertes who plots against the life of Hamlet. He employed this technique of subplot with a very skillful way and shown subplot runs parallel to the main plot. The Chorus is another noteworthy element in Greek tragedy that supports to the main plot, but in the forms of commentator. It was sometime an integral part of the plot, some times only loosely related to it. After the classical Greek period many a Playwrights disowned this technique, instead they amply employed songs to comment on the events. Even in modern drama, Bertold Brecht's Political satire, '*Three Penny Opera*' contains several songs that comments explicitly on the social implications of the play.

2) Dialogue: Drama in its pure form uses words to create action through the dialogue of characters: its essential quality is interaction. A play is at its most dramatic, of course when it uses the 'give-and-take' of dialogue to create interaction: a specialized form of conversation. If we compare a play with a novel, we will notice that the author is speaking directly to the readers in the form of characters' dialogue, but in a play dramatist cannot direct link with his audience. Dialogue, then is an extraordinarily significant form of conversation because it is the means by which every play conveys the total make-up of its imaginative world. Dialogue fulfills the need of not only the audience but also the director, the set designer and the actors as well. It serves in form of so many purposes; Dialogue in a play is necessarily a more artificial form of discourse than ordinary conversation. Dialogues are written for the actors and actor's delivery of a dialogue goes a long way. Actor is confined to speak his dialogue in a specific context; in proper delivery system and in supportive action. Otherwise, contextual dialogue of actor would become meaningless. Considering the stage directors, actor has to deliver his dialogue to suit the occasion, as it would create the total effect of a play on the spectators. In this respect, J. L. Styan describes 'dialogue as dramatic speech'.

3) Characters: Characters in a play take major role in the performance on the stage that may be called 'dramatic personae'. As a story needs a plot, so it needs characters. The playwright makes use the number of characters as the necessity of the plot or story to represent on the stage. That depends upon the requirement of the play. The modern and post modern play frequently has a small cast in which only two or three characters have much to do. There are some modern plays with limited casts in which most of the characters are worthwhile and which provide opportunity to others besides the leading characters. What quantity of characters in a play that doesn't matter, but there needs of total effect of the characters? The Indian feminist playwright 'Poile Sengupta' in her plays "*Alipha*" and "*Thus Spake Shoorpanaka*, so said Shakuni' have used only two unnamed characters." "MAN" and "WOMEN" to create great impact over the conscious audience by adopting the unique subject matters which are fitted to the modern era. In Brecht's "*Endgame*", there are only characters, but they are in their significant place. On the other hand, Shakespeare's most of the plays are loaded with the characters in larger numbers as there is a necessity of plot. His historical plays "*Richard II*" or "*Henry V*" carry a number of characters for the need of the plot. The mere smile of minor character helps to lead for ward a dramatic action, and sometime it achieves the technical success of the play. The minor characters put on for the entertainment of the audience.

4) Conflict: To some play, conflict becomes an essential part, whether; it is either in external or internal form. Actually, conflict of any play leads towards the pinnacle point of crisis. Sometime becomes the soul of a play. Without conflict a play becomes incipid and monotonous and not interesting at all. That is why; conflict takes the place of essence of drama. In the modern drama, conflict centers round the philosophical belief that life is meaningful.

5) Stage Directions: It is an exaggration saying that a play never happens without stage directions. Then what are stage directions? Stage directions are guidelines, suggestions, given by the dramatist in the script of play. These are the guide lines given for actors, and directors and producer to follow in their capacities to perform the action on stage. Stage directions help to all these theatre makers to do accordingly, to create total effect of the play. Through the medium of the stage directions, the dramatist attempts to exercise his control on the production. The quantity of the stage directions depends on the necessity of the play. Most of

historical plays provide a plenty of stage directions whereas the modern plays consist of few 'words-and-sentences' stage directions.

6) Theme: Any play's action develops through its interoven incidents together that develops the theme of play. The notion of theme or story line of play moves away from very details of character and action in course of play happenings. Automatically theme is prepared in the action of characters.

1.2.4 Conclusion

The above discussion in regard with drama confirms that drama is one of highly praiseworthy literary genre which appears as a literary art, deals with fiction or an imaginary story that is presented through characters and dialogue. However, it is a special kind of fiction because it is designed for acted out rather than narrated. It differs from other forms, as drama narrates live out story through characters. The playwright does not comment or explain about the story line of play. It means that drama delivers us a direct presentation of life experience through characters. In that case we may say that drama is a representational art.

1.3 Summary

In this module first, we have attempted to explain the general meaning of drama. We have also tried to differentiate it from other forms of literature. With the concrete discussion of drama form, you may form certain view points about the basic elements of drama which make drama unique. You have seen also that the term drama is employed at three different levels now. It is performance. It is a composition to read or perform and it is a branch of literature.

1.4 Glossary and Novels

- * Antiquity: ancient times, great age
- * Dramaturgy: scientific exploration in dramatic presentation
- * Dimensions: aspect or facet of a situation
- * Paramount: supreme, requiring first consideration
- * Intimacy: close association
- * Collaborators: people who work together in the same spirit
- * Composite: made up of various parts

- * Phenomenon: fact or occurrence that appears
- * Pantomime: use of gesture and facial expression to convey meaning
- * designate: specify, describe as style
- * Fictitious: imaginary, unreal
- * imply: strongly suggest the truth, signify
- * Ostensible: apparent, professed

1.5 Check your progress

A) Rewrite the following sentences choosing the correct alternative.

- 1) is nevertheless one of the ostensible Objectives of drama.
 - a) Entertainment
 - b) amuse
 - c) Convey message
 - d) To experience
- 2) Rice Elmer is opined that the essence of drama is not words but is
 - a) language
 - b) action
 - c) dance
 - d) Pantomime
- 3) Literally, the meaning of the word 'theater' is
 - a) seeing place
 - b) performing place
 - c) living place
 - d) outdoor place
- 4) in a play does role as a vehicle of carrying values.
 - a) Plot
 - b) character
 - c) dialogue
 - d) setting
- 5) Plot is basically term of
 - a) structure
 - b) language
 - c) stage
 - d) spectator

1.6 Exercise

A) Answer the following questions in 250 words.

- 1) Write a detailed note on the evolution of drama at three different levels.
- 2) Trace the origin of drama.

B) Write short note on the following in 150 words.

- 1) Diverse definitions of drama

- 2) Plot in drama
- 3) The importance of characters in drama
- 4) Dialogue as a vehicle of communication in drama

1.7 Answer the check your progress.

- 1) Entertainment 2) action 3) Seeing Place
- 4) Character 5) Structure



Module II

Tragedy as a Form

Contents:

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- 2.1 Introduction
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 - 2.2.1 Origin of Tragedy
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2.0 Objectives:

1. To trace the origin of Tragedy
2. To understand the development of Tragedy as a form
3. To understand the term tragedy
4. To familiarize with the components of tragedy
5. To introduce the different types of tragedy

2.1 Introduction:

In the previous unit, you have studied definitions and elements of drama; this must have given you a thorough understanding of drama, as a literary genre. Along with the study of its elements, it becomes very vital to know the different types of drama. From the earliest times, drama has been divided broadly into two types, tragedy and comedy. One deals with dark side of life, the other with its light side. Tragedy aims at inspiring us with pity and fear; comedy aims at evoking our laughter. Tragedy stands superior to comedy. This is a well-received view in various philosophical aesthetics, literary criticism and amongst many ordinary literary appreciators. Since the early ages, tragedy is taken as the highest or the most difficult literary form whilst comedy is judged to be inferior to tragedy. The present unit shares the detailed discussion on tragedy as a literary genre. In this unit, we shall study the origin and development of tragedy as a form and shall try to understand the structure of classical tragedies. The definition and the constituents/elements of tragedy are also discussed in the later part of this module.

2.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter:

2.2.1 Origin of Tragedy:

The exact origin of tragedy and its development in subsequent ages and cultures have been investigated rigorously by anthropologists, philologists and archaeologists with results that are suggestive but conjectural. Even it is not that distinct to trace the exact etymology of the word tragedy. The most generally accepted source is the Greek *tragōidia*, or “goat-song,” from *tragos* (“goat”) and *aeidein* (“to sing”). The word could have referred either to the prize, a goat, that was awarded to the dramatists whose plays won the earliest competitions or to the dress (goat skins) of the performers, or to the goat that was sacrificed in the rituals from which tragedy was developed. Tragedy was performed in Athens at the three annual festivals of Dionysus, the most important of which was the Great Dionysia. On three successive mornings at this festival, three tragic poets (dramatists), who had been selected competitively earlier in the year, each of them used to perform a tetralogy consisting of three tragedies and a satyr-play. In addition, the festival featured comic and dithyrambic contests, and religious processions and rituals of various kinds. At the close of the festival, ten judges, who had been chosen by lot, determined the winners and awarded prizes.

Tragedy, as a literary form is thought to have been developed from the ancient dithyramb, choral lyrics, which were sung by a male chorus in honour of the God Dionysus at the annual carnivals. These performances also included group dancing and some brief dialogue between the leader and the chorus. At first the dithyramb was a crude improvisation based on the myths about Dionysus and this may have taken the form of a rough burlesque or satire, from which the satyr-play of classical drama was evolved out. With the passing time, tragedy came to have a more formal artistic structure and its content was expanded to include stories from the whole legendary tradition.

At some point, a radical shift took place in the approach by replacing the older boisterousness with a serious philosophical attitude about the very existence of human beings. The addition of an actor to the chorus allowed more complicated and lengthy stories to be used. According to the Greeks, the father of drama/ the inventor of tragedy was Thespis. Thespis put on the first tragedy at the festival of Dionysus in Athens and was the first prize winner at Great Dionysia in 534 BC. He first used an independent actor, as opposed to the choir in his production and was responsible for several other innovations such as masks, make up and customs.

Aeschylus (525 BC – 456 BC) is usually regarded as the one who, realizing the dramatic possibilities of the dialogue, first added a second speaker and thus invented the form of tragedy. That so sophisticated a form could have been fully developed by a single artist, however, is scarcely credible. Hundreds of early tragedies have been lost, including some by Aeschylus himself. Of some 90 plays of his credit, only seven have been survived. One of his best known works is the *Oresteia*, which is about Agamemnon's son Orestes, who revenged his father only to be persecuted by the Erinys.

Euripides (480 BC– 406 BC) was one of the famous Greek dramatists but not exceedingly popular. Euripides wrote about the Greek legends and myths in an everyday language and without traditional and moral values. He wanted to make his characters as people really are not how they ought to be. He was also interested in the individual rather than the gods and heroes. Euripides used the *deus ex machina*, literally means a god from the machine. This is a technique incorporated in a tragedy where there is the sudden and unexpected invention of a god which would change the story. He used the chorus less and had them dressed in more realistic costumes. His

perhaps best-known work is *Medea*, but his plays *Orestes*, *Bacchae*, *Trojan Women* and *Electra* are also popular.

Together with Euripides and Aeschylus, Sophocles is considered the greatest playwright of Ancient Greece. At the age of 28, he won the first prize in a dramatic competition, defeating Aeschylus, and was to win 20 other first prizes in his life. Of Sophocles' best-known tragedies are *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Electra*. He often wrote plots about people's destinies and the consequences of their actions. He liked the ideal, and wanted to show his characters as people should be and act. He introduced a third actor on stage, increased the choir from 12 to 14 individuals, wrote more complicated plots and liked to write about religious and moral themes. He was very prolific and wrote over 120 plays.

The themes, purpose and focus of tragedy has changed with passing time. The Roman world failed to revive tragedy. Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) wrote at least eight tragedies, mostly adaptations of Greek materials, such as the stories of Oedipus, Hippolytus, and Agamemnon, but with little of the Greek tragic feeling for character and theme. The emphasis is on sensation and rhetoric, tending toward melodrama and bombast. The plays are of interest in this context mainly as the not entirely healthy inspiration for the precursors of Elizabethan tragedy in England. The high poetic spirits of the mid-16th century began to turn the old medieval forms of the miracles and mysteries to new uses and to look to the ancient plays, particularly the lurid tragedies of Seneca, for their models. A bloody play, *Gorboduc*, by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, first acted in 1561, is now known as the first formal tragedy in English, though it is far from fulfilling the high offices of the form in tone, characterization, and theme. Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) continued the Senecan tradition of the "tragedy of blood" with somewhat more sophistication than *Gorboduc* but even more bloodletting. Elizabethan tragedy never freed itself completely from certain melodramatic aspects of the influence of Seneca. As discussed above, in ancient Greece, tragedy was a ritual performance of the downfall of a noble man – usually a great man or a king, s/he is brought down because of some inherent fault (hamartia). In the medieval period, tragedy was concerned with noble or illustrious men too, but these tales usually took on a Christian moral valence. During the Elizabethan England, tragedy reached at its pinnacle. The early greatest contributors during this period were university wits, among them Christopher Marlowe was of high merit. The tragedies

reached to its highest popularity during Shakespearean period. Shakespeare violated the classical unities for the commercial profit, he was least interested in portraying the pure form of tragedy and pure comedy as expected by classicists, and instead he invented tragicomedy, a new genre of drama. A Shakespearean tragedy is the story of suffering and calamity, where the befall of the hero is exceptional, unexpected and is contrasted with his previous happiness and glory. Shakespearean tragedies always concerned with person of great eminence almost with kings or princes or great generals. E.g., Hamlet, a prince of Denmark; King Lear, a king of Britain; Macbeth, a Scottish general and Othello, a general in the Venetian military.

Structure:

Classical tragedies were composed within a definite structural framework, although there are occasional minor variations in some plays. Greek tragedy was performed without intermissions or breaks.

The following are the main elements of a typical tragedy:

Prologue:- the opening scene, in which the background of the story is established, usually by a single actor or in a dialogue between two actors.

Parodos:- the entrance of the chorus, usually chanting a lyric which bears some relation to the main theme of the play.

Episode:- the counterpart of the modern act or scene, in which the plot is developed through action and dialogue between the actors, with the chorus sometimes playing a minor role.

Stasimon:- the choral ode. A stasimon comes at the end of each episode so that the tragedy is a measured alternation between these two elements.

Exodos:- the final action after the last stasimon, ended by the ceremonial exit of all the players.

The Chorus:

The chorus was the nucleus from which tragedy evolved out and it continued to have a central place in the drama throughout classical times. The use of the chorus varied, depending on the method of the playwright and the needs of the play being performed, but most often it acted as the “ideal spectator,” as in *King Oedipus*, wherein it clarifies the experiences and feelings of the characters in everyday terms and expresses the conventional attitude toward developments in the story. In some

plays, like *The Suppliants* of Aeschylus, the chorus was itself a central figure in the tragedy rather than a group of interested bystanders, and this had a direct effect on the size and nature of its role, but usually the chorus was not so closely involved in the action of the drama. In general, the tragedians used the chorus to create a psychological and emotional background to the action through its odes, to introduce and question new characters, to point out the significance of events as they occurred, to establish facts and affirm the outlook of society, to cover the passage of time between events, and to separate episodes. The trend in tragedy was toward a decline in the importance of the chorus, caused mainly by the introduction of additional actors and increasing sophistication in their dramatic use, and by the more personal and complex nature of the stories selected for dramatization. With the passage of time the proportion of choral to individual lines decreased significantly, and the dramatic functions of the chorus, aside from the continued use of choral odes between episodes, were greatly reduced. At a typical performance of tragedy in the fifth century, the chorus marched into the orchestra chanting the *parodos* and remained drawn up there until the end of the play. At various points it divided into semi-choruses and moved around in the orchestra to suit the requirements of the play, but its most important moments came when it chanted the choral odes to music, accompanied by stylized gestures and a series of intricate group dances. At times the chorus also engaged in a lyrical dialogue, or *kommos*, with one of the characters and made brief comments or inquiries during the course of an episode.

Check your progress – I

A) Complete the following sentence by choosing the correct alternatives:

- i) The word tragedy is derived from the Greek word *tragoidia*, here, *tragos* means _____.
a) drama b) lion c) goat d) song
- ii) Tragedy, as a literary form is thought to have been developed from ancient _____.
a) myths b) dithyramb c) legends d) epics
- iii) _____ performed the first tragedy at the festival of Dionysus in Athens.
a) Sophocles b) Aeschylus c) Euripides d) Thespis

- iv) _____ first used an independent actor in a tragedy.
a) Thespis b) Sophocles c) Horace d) Plato
- v) Deix ex machina literally means _____.
a) an unexpected machine b) out of the past
c) a god from the machine d) none of the above
- vi) In a classical tragedy, exodos means _____.
a) the opening scene b) background scene
c) the entrance of the chorus d) the ceremonial exit of all the players

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

- i) What is a tetralogy?
ii) Who is regarded as the inventor of tragedy?
iii) Who won the first ever tragedy competition?
iv) What is deus ex machina?
v) What is the literal meaning of the word tragedy in Greek sense?

2.2 Tragedy: Definition and Elements:

The term tragedy is applied to any story in which a hero experiences a reversal of action (downfall) due to his/her own human flaws, – flaw like greed, over-ambition, or even an excess of love, honour or loyalty sometimes by fate (will of the gods) or ordinary human flaws and the story concludes in the tragic death or suffering of the protagonist.

According to Aristotle, “Tragedy is the imitation of an action, that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narration; through pity and fear effecting a proper catharsis of these emotions”.

From the above definition, Aristotle figures out the following characteristic features of a good tragedy:

- 1) It is mimetic,
- 2) It is serious,
- 3) It tells a full story of an appropriate length,
- 4) It contains rhythm and harmony,
- 5) It is performed rather than narrated, and
- 6) It arouses feelings of pity and fear and then purges these feelings through catharsis.

Aristotle, from his *Poetics*, observes six components that constitute a successful tragedy. These six components are to be seen as separate for the sake of analysis. On the stage they form a unity. The six components are: plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle. Of the above six components, Aristotle gives huge importance to the Plot. For him, the plot is 'the very soul' of tragedy, because action is of paramount importance to the development and significance of a drama. The rest of the elements of a tragedy can be considered subsidiary. Aristotle gives a detailed description of each element of a tragedy with their significant role.

I) Plot:

Plot is the soul of a tragedy. It is the first principle and the most important feature of a tragedy. Plot is the artistic arrangement of incidents. Story gets its impact or power only when the incidents are arranged in the correct artistic sequence with effective dramatic link between the series of events to be depicted. It must have a universal significance, definite structure, unity of theme and purpose.

A successful plot of a tragedy should have completeness, certain magnitude, unity, determinate structure and universality. Let us discuss all the essential features one by one.

1. **Completeness:** Completeness of the plot means the plot should have “an organic whole,” meaning. It must have a well beginning, middle, and an end. The beginning or the incentive moment must instill the cause-and-effect chain based on something which is within the play. The middle, or climax, must be caused by earlier incidents and itself causes the incidents that follow it inevitably. The end, or resolution, should be caused by the preceding events but not lead to other incidents outside the compass of the play. The end should therefore resolve the problem

created during the incentive moment. The cause-and-effect chain of actions ‘tying up’ from the incentive to the Climax as *desis* or Complication; and the cause-and – effect chain of actions ‘unraveling’ from the *desis* to the resolution are called *lusisi* or denouement. There should be appropriate sequencing of incidents resulting the feel of completeness.

2. **Magnitude:** Magnitude of the plot refers to the length of the play. Usually, the length of the play should be what the viewers can keep up in their memory. At the same time, the lengthy plot with many incidents can make it a complex one and make viewers baffled. Aristotle recommends complexity of the plot by the inclusion of as many incidents revolving around one theme. The more the number of incidents included in the plot, that make the play richer and improves its artistic value. A brief plot will reduce the scope for artistic value, the artistic features of a tragedy can never be found. At the same time too many incidents without any coherence or sequence will indeed ruin the quality of tragedy. Hence the magnitude of the play is very important. It should be complex, compact and comprehensive.

3. **Unity:** The classical three unities are: *unity of action, unity of time and unity of place*. Aristotle emphasises only one of the unities, the *unity of action*. He was against the plurality of action as it weakens the tragic effect of the tragedy. There might be a number of incidents depicted in a tragedy but all of them must be logically connected with each other and they must all be conducive to one common effect, the effect aimed at by the dramatist. Aristotle only once mentions the *Unity of Time* in relation to dramatic action. Comparing the epic with the tragedy, Aristotle states, “*Tragedy tries, as far as possible, to live within a single revolution of the sun, or only slightly to exceed it, whereas the epic observes no limits in its time of action*” (*Poetics*). By this, Aristotle meant that all the action should occur within one day. It is merely a suggestion not a rule and indeed several of the Greek tragedies with which Aristotle was familiar with were far exceeding this time limit. Aristotle never mentions the *Unity of Place* at all in his *Poetics* but Aristotle might mean that a tragedy should exist in a single physical location.

The plot may be either simple or complex, but Aristotle suggests complex plot. Simple plots have only a “change of fortune” (catastrophe). Complex plots have both “reversal of action” (peripeteia) and “recognition/ discovery of truth” (anagnorisis) connected with the catastrophe. Both peripeteia and anagnorisis turn upon surprise. Aristotle explains that a peripeteia occurs when a character produces an effect

opposite to that which he intended to produce, while an anagnorisis “is a sudden shift from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined for good or bad fortune.” He argues that the best plots combine these two as part of their cause-and-effect chain (i.e., the peripeteia leads directly to the anagnorisis); this in turns creates the catastrophe, leading to the final “scene of suffering”.

4. **Well Determinate Structure:** Well determinate structure of the plot means the effective linking of the various events and incidents in the plot with a remarkable coherence. It is the expertise of the poet to prune or avoid all the irrational and irrelevant details from the plot. Action is the paramount of a tragedy; so the action should be shown as a complex one, and this complexity increases the artistic value of the play. There should be a perfect sequencing of the events or incidents happening in the play. Whatever the turmoil, the link with which the actions are held together should not be affected. The whole body of the play must be able to stand as a unit.

5. **Universality:** Universality of the plot refers to the fact that whatever that is imitated or shown in the tragedy should be closer to the real life. The way the action is shown in the play should remind us that anywhere in the real life a human being will be acting in the same way how the hero has acted. Inclusion of theme and the associated actions of universal nature will give more significant value to the play enabling the dramatist catch the attention of a large number of people. A simple plot fails to create artistic value whereas a complex plot is rich with incidents linking to the major action or theme of the play. These incidents are in definite sequence leading to the cathartic effect of tragedy. A complex plot has the following elements: reversal, recognition, and catharsis. The hero of the play reaches to the peak of his glory or status and then surprising all, his fortune is reversed due to an error in judgment. He falls from a happy state to a state of misery. Since the hero of a tragedy is a person of noble status, this sudden reversal in his status makes an ironic twist. As the play progresses, there is a recognition of the true identities or a shift from ignorance to knowledge making people aware of the hidden truth or true identities. This reversal and recognition result in sufferings by arousing the feelings of pity and fear in the audience. Pity on the sad plight of the tragic hero and fear at the anxiety of the thought whether that fate of the tragic hero would befall on us. According to Aristotle, this suffering undergone by the audience while watching a tragic play is the greatest merit of a good tragedy and it decides the true value of the play.

II) Character:

Character comes of second importance next to plot in a tragedy. Tragedy is the imitation of action or thought or emotions, and these aspects belong to the man who is the object of imitation.

Aristotle lays down four essential qualities. First, the characters must be good, secondly, they must be appropriate, thirdly, they must have likeness and fourth, they must have consistency. Aristotle explains four qualities for the character of the tragic hero whose actions are imitated to bring about reversal, recognition and catharsis – the elements that constitute the success of a tragic play. The tragic hero should be good, renowned and prosperous; he should be courageous and dear to everyone, he should be true to life that any one of the audience should be able to identify himself or herself with the feelings or emotions undergone by the hero because whatever is depicted in the play about the hero must make the viewers feel that they are closer to life or real life situations itself; and then the hero should be a consistent person in the sense whatever qualities or weakness assigned to him should be consistently there with him throughout. The adversities that happen to him shouldn't be an artificially created one as a miracle. All the adversities that he is facing or experiencing due to a reversal of his fortune must be due to some weakness or flaw in his character. The hero is neither an ideal nor a virtuous man, but he is a good man and any one of the viewers can easily identify the hero with any other man among them that is he must be so much closer to life. His fall doesn't happen all on a sudden as a shock but it is due to a flaw or frailty in his character which makes the hero more credible in his sufferings. The consistency in the character makes the people identify with the hero in a more convincing manner because any other person in such a situation would do the same as what the tragic hero has done. It is the reversal of the character from his prosperous position to a pitiful status due to an error in judgment resulted from a flaw or weakness in his character that arouses the feeling of pity in the play. The tragic flaw in the character is known as hamartia. The intensity of the tragedy increases as the character causes some destructions or damages to his kith or kin due to his ignorance of truth, and finally by the pitiful condition of the hero when the truth is informed to him.

III) Thought:

The third important component of a tragic play is thought. Thought is important because actions spring out from thoughts. A tragedy is the imitation of action or imitation of men in action. Everything that are supposed to be brought out through the effect of speech or action are included under thought. The verbal and the nonverbal impact of a tragic drama may be assigned to its action or speech; but both these action and speech are the co-existing components of thought. The cathartic effect of the tragic play by arousing the feelings of pity and fear is ultimately the product of thought. In the case of action, no verbal explanation is needed for the intended effect because the action itself is independent to achieve the aim; whereas in the case of speech, the aimed effect has to be achieved by the speech itself which is ultimately depending upon how the character delivers that speech. Dramatic incidents and dramatic speech should be analysed with the same perception since both aim at the same objective.

IV) Diction:

Diction takes the 4th place in the sequence of the importance of the components that constitute a tragedy. Diction is in fact the metrical arrangement of words in the play. It includes the verbal expression of the content or the subject matter of the tragic play. The nature, type, quality and aptness of vocabulary used in a tragedy should be proper and appropriate to the character, plot and objective of the tragedy. Embellishments are welcome in the language used, and the use of appropriate metaphors is considered to be an intellectual approach to diction. Whether the diction is rich, intellectual or decorative, the objective is achieved through the manner that text or script is delivered by the character. In this situation, the character must have a deep awareness about the tone of the content. The character must be able to discriminate between a command, request, advice, threat, query and a prayer. When the poet writes a script in which the character is intended to command the Goddess, and the character delivers the script as a prayer, the whole intended purpose of the situation is damaged.

V) Song:

Aristotle calls the musical elements of the chorus as song or melody. Song is a splendid aspect of tragedy because it makes sense to everybody and the viewer appreciates the artistic form with sheer pleasure. Chorus creates and keeps the

melody of the play and Aristotle strongly insists that chorus should be an integral part of the play as an actor or action is to a play. Song that is incorporated to the play should be taking a serious role in contributing to the unity of the plot.

VI) Spectacle:

Spectacle is the last component of a tragic play. It is considered to be the lowest importance because it has very little to do with literature. The poet who creates an artistic work gives primary attention to the inner structure of the work. All his effort will be to give life to the work and to achieve the artistic value. Usually, no creator does the creation thinking about the spectacle. The spectacular beauty arises when the play is brought out as a composite art to be performed with actors, with the artistic value. So, it is an automatic byproduct of a good play. The poet who focuses on the spectacle fails to achieve the artistic beauty of the play.

Four Unique Components of Tragedy:

There are more four specific components in addition to the above-mentioned ones that make tragedy a unique work of art in the classical sense. They are *anagnorisis*, *hamartia*, *peripeteia* & *catharsis*. The Greek word *anagnorisis* means 'recognition'. Aristotle describes it as an essential component of tragic plot that results the striking recognition resulted due to the change in the status from ignorance to knowledge, resulting the revelation of the hidden truth. *Hamartia* is described by Aristotle as the 'error in judgment'. The tragic hero is a man of noble status; still, he faces misfortune not because of his villainy but due to an error in judgment. His sufferings are due to a moral flaw which makes the impact of sufferings all the more intense. *Catharsis* is a medical term that means 'purgation'. Aristotle uses this term in tragedy for describing the real aesthetic pleasure of tragedy resulted by *catharsis*, the purgation of the feelings of pity and fear. *Peripeteia* is an ironic twist in a tragedy that projects the fall of the hero from a higher status to the meanest level and into the intense sufferings. *Peripeteia* is resulted due to *hamartia*. These four components are essential for a tragedy to fulfill its objectives.

Check your progress – II

A) Complete the following sentences choosing the correct alternative:

- i) Tragedy is an imitation of _____.
- a) story b) action c) man d) nature

element of surprise in them. Since the Greek tragedies were performed during the religious festivals, there had a strong religious and moral element in the plays. Fate (nemesis) was supreme over the characters in the play. The Greek tragedy avoided scenes of brutal violence on the stage, though the subjects were often shocking and terrible. The incidents of violence, suicide, murder and other shocking elements were usually reported by the chorus. There were as few as five to six characters in the play. The plot of such tragedies revolves around a protagonist, usually the belonged to a high social order; a man with exceptional character but with an innate flaw which led to his downfall. Women and slaves were not considered fit subjects for a tragedy. The tragedies were 'pure tragedies' and there was no mixing of the comic with the tragic. There was an adherence to the classical unities i.e., unity of time, unity of action and unity of place. Greek tragedies were performed as trilogies; a series of three plays. But after serious plays usually there would be a 'Satyr play'.

II) Revenge Tragedy or the Tragedy of Blood:

A tragedy in which the dominant motive is revenge for a real or imagined injury. The characteristic features of this kind of tragedy are the use of materials of murder, bloodshed, violence, revenge, ghosts, mutilation and carnage on the stage, are derived from Roman dramatist Seneca. These kinds of tragedies were very popular during Elizabethan and Jacobean England and found its highest expression in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The revenge tragedy is derived originally from the Roman tragedies of Seneca and it was established on the English stage by Thomas Kyd with his *The Spanish Tragedy* (1586), later to be followed by Marlow's *The Jew of Malta* (1592), John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612) and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602).

III) Domestic Tragedy:

The Domestic Tragedy as the very title signifies is a return from the high royal theme of the classical tragedy to the familiar matters of homely domestic life. It is the inevitable reaction to the horror - revenge theme of the domestic world. The domestic tragedy is found to bear certain characteristic both in its theme and in its technique. The primary feature of the domestic tragedy as indicated already belongs to the ordinary work of life. It is no more the story of revenge in royal courts, the shrewd conspiracy from political power or the downfall of some imperial monarch as found in all the renowned tragedies of ancient Greece and Rome as well as English

Elizabethan period. The subject matter of this kind of tragedy has nothing to do with improbable situation or any sort of grand heroic feat. The problem of domestic life indeed constitutes the essence of the theme of the domestic tragedy. This type of drama presents domestic problems and conflicts which result ultimately in human suffering and death. The development of domestic tragedy has its beginning in the great Elizabethan period and found continued in the restoration age.

IV) Social tragedy:

Social tragedy revolves around an issue of general social or political significance. These represent middle class or working class heroes and heroines. Notable tragedies of nineteenth and twentieth centuries are Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and, *Ghosts*, and Arthur Millers *Death of a Salesman* (1949).

V) Melodrama:

Melodrama, this term is originally applied to musical plays including operas. The protagonists are of flat types. In these kinds of tragedies, drama relies on implausible events and sensational actions. Continuous action drives the plot through a series of adventures. It thrives on thrills, excitement, suspense and rescues. The conflict is external and everything is delineated as black or white. Melodrama deals with serious subjects, but its seriousness is only pretence. Most of the serious dramas never reach the heights of tragedy and thus become melodramas. Adventure films are best examples of this kind of tragedy.

VI) Romantic tragedy:

Romances which have unhappy ending or with the death of the hero and heroine are categorised as romantic tragedies e.g. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

VII) Heroic drama:

The Heroic play is a peculiar product of the Restoration period (1660-1700). It was often criticized as unnatural, artificial and alien. It came into existence in response to the spiritual needs of a tired, disillusioned and decadent aristocracy. It created a dream-world with love, virtue and greatness in contrast to the debased life in reality of the times. It dealt with the themes of love and honour or duty. It is an artificial world which can be best termed as 'heroic' for the protagonist and his belief in his absolute power over his actions and surroundings. The Heroic play shows more affinity with the epic with its character, with its style, especially the use of

heroic metre. The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions are all exalted and epic in style. Love and valour are the themes of a heroic play. The audience is amazed by the superhuman devotion and loyalty shown by the hero. To this love is linked the theme of honour, which includes all spiritual and moral qualities and the hero strives to possess them to be worthy of his beloved. The Heroic play shows complications such as two men loving the same woman, or two brothers or two friends. These lead to sudden turns in the fortune of the hero. The Heroic play usually ended on a happy note as the aim of the dramatist was to present the hero as a model to be emulated. Hence, he was rewarded in the end. Thus, there is poetic justice in the tragedy unlike the Greek or Shakespearean tragedy. Another version of such a play is the blank verse tragedy which uses the blank verse instead of the heroic couplet as the metre. John Dryden wrote such Heroic plays His *All for Love* based on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is a famous Heroic play.

Check your Progress -III

A) Complete the following sentences choosing the correct alternative:

- i) Revenge tragedy is derived originally from _____.
 a) Sophocles b) Thomas Kyd c) Seneca d) Shakespeare
- ii) _____ tragedy presents domestic problems and conflicts.
 a) social b) classical c) Shakespearean d) domestic
- iii) Aristotle's *Poetics* is based on the analysis of the _____.
 a) Greek classical tragedies b) Roman revenge tragedies
 c) Greek legends d) ancient epics of Greece
- iv) The heroic plays are a peculiar product of _____.
 a) Victorian age b) Restoration period
 c) Elizabethan age d) Romantic period
- v) Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is an example of _____.
 a) revenge tragedy b) romantic tragedy
 c) social tragedy d) classical tragedy
- vi) Love and valour are the themes of _____.

- a) a heroic play
- b) domestic play
- c) Elizabethan play
- d) social play

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

- i) Who used to report the incidents of violence and other shocking elements in a classical or Greek tragedy?
- ii) What is a pure tragedy, according to classics?
- iii) What are the characteristic features of a revenge tragedy?
- iv) Who introduced revenge tragedy on the English stage?
- v) What constitutes the essence of the theme in domestic tragedy?

2.3 Summary

Greek tragedy is the oldest type of drama; this drama originated as the Greeks worshipped their god of life, Dionysius. The term ‘tragedy’ is derived from the Greek word *Tragoidia*, which means a goat song. It is still unclear, where this term comes from, but there are various theories:

There may have been a goat sacrifice connected with the rituals of Dionysus and the original Dithyrambic songs sung at this feast; the male followers of Dionysus, the satyrs, were half man, half animal and had goat-like features; the goat, as the prize was awarded to the dramatists whose plays won the competitions or the performers used to dress the goat skin during performances.

Greeks consider Thespis to be the father of drama. He was the first to perform tragedy at the festival of Dionysus and the first prize winner in 534 BC. He used an independent actor for the first time in Greek tragedy as opposed to the choir. The classical Greek tragedies were nurtured and popularized by Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. Roman playwright Seneca popularized tragedies in Rome; he wrote eight tragedies modeled on the Greek materials. His innovation to the theatre was his emphasis on sensation and rhetoric, tending towards melodrama and bombast. Following the Senecan model, English playwright, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton wrote the first ever formal English tragedy, *Gorboduc*. Thomas Kyd continued the Senecan tradition of “the tragedy of blood” in England and wrote his famous *The Spanish Tragedy* (C. 1587). During Elizabethan England, tragedy

reached to the heights of popularity. The major contributors were Christopher Marlowe, John Webster and William Shakespeare.

Aristotle defines the term tragedy in his *Poetics* and figures out some characteristic features of a good tragedy those are, mimetic; serious; a full story of an appropriate length; containing rhythm and harmony; being performed rather than being narrated and arouses feelings of pity and fear and then purges them through catharsis. Aristotle also observes six components of a successful tragedy and they are: plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle.

2.4 Glossary and Notes:

Anthropology (n): the study of the human race, its culture and society and its physical development

Philology (n): the study of language, especially its history and development

Archaeology (n): the study of buildings, graves, tools and other objects that belonged to people who lived in the past, in order to learn about their culture and society

Etymology (n): the study of the origin and history of words

Conjectural (n): based on how something seems and not on proof

Dithyramb (n): a wild choral hymn of ancient Greece, especially one dedicated to Dionysus

Chorus (n): in ancient Greek tragedy, a group of performers who comment together on the main action;

Dialogue (n): conversation that is written for a book, play or film

Myth (n): an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts

Deus ex machina (n): 'god from the machine'; an unexpected power or event that saves a situation that seems without hope; especially in a play or novel

Boisterous (adj): noisy, energetic and rough

Sophisticated (adj): having a good understanding of the way people behave or a good knowledge of culture and fashion

Prolific (adj): producing a great number or amount of something

Counterpart (n): a person or thing that has the same purpose as another one in a different place or organization

Ode (n): a poem expressing the writer's thoughts and feelings about a particular person or subject usually written to that person or subject

Downfall (n): the usually sudden destruction of a person, organization and their loss of power, money or health

Protagonist (n): one of the main characters in a story or a play

Imitation (n): made to be look like something else

2.5 Answers to check your progress:

2.5.1 Check your progress – I

A) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternatives:

- i) c ii) b iii) d iv) a v) c vi) d

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

- i) performance of a group of four dramas, the first three tragic and the last satiric
ii) Thespis.
iii) Thespis
iv) the sudden and unexpected invention of a god
v) a goat song

2.5.2 Check your progress – II

A) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternatives:

- i) b ii) a iii) c iv) d v) d vi) b

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

- i) all the action should occur within one day
ii) error of judgement
iii) the metrical arrangement of words in the play

- iv) catharsis of pity and fear
- v) plot
- vi) complex

2.5.3 Check your progress – III

A) Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct alternatives:

- i) c ii) d iii) a iv) b v) b vi) a

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

- i) The chorus
- ii) No mixing of the comic with the tragic & adherence to the classical unities
- iii) The use of materials of murder, bloodshed, violence, revenge, ghosts, mutilation and carnage on the stage
- iv) Roman dramatist Seneca
- v) The problem of domestic life

2.6 Exercises:

1. Answer the following in about 200-250 words each:

- i) Write a detailed note on the origin of tragedy.
- ii) Explain the importance of chorus in Greek drama.
- iii) Comment on the structure of classical tragedies.
- iv) Write a detailed note on the elements of a tragedy.
- v) Write a detailed note on major types of tragedy.

2. Write short notes on the following in about 100- 150 words each:

- i) The origin of the term tragedy
- ii) Aristotle's definition of tragedy
- iii) The three unities
- iv) Four unique components of tragedy
- v) Revenge tragedy

vi) Heroic play

vii) Domestic tragedy

2.7 Suggestive Reading:

- Abrams, M.H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. Bangalore: Thomson Heinle, 2005. Print.
- Heath, Malcolm. Aristotle Poetics, London: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Rees, R.J. English Literature. New Delhi: Macmillan India ltd, 2008. Print



Module III
The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde

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3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the type of the play
- Understand Oscar Wilde's contribution to the drama (Literary work)
- Understand the social and manner able aspects Wilde deals with.
- Analyze the characters in play
- Study the title, setting, structure plot, humour in the play.
- Study the different themes in the play

3.1 Introduction:

The Importance of Being Earnest is Oscar Wilde's comic masterpiece. It is farcical comedy. It was written in three weeks during a family holiday at Worthing in August-September, 1894. It was first performed at the St. James Theatre, London on

14th February 1895. It was at once an outstanding success. It is Wilde's funniest play and it is also the most poignant play.

The play in its original version had a much more complicated plot, an eighteenth century setting and a whole extra act. The play was written in Four Acts. But at the request of the play's director Alexander, Wilde shortened the play by dropping the third act of his original version. The play as we find it now in three Acts gives it a sparer and modern look.

The theme is entirely fantastic where the weakness of Wilde become less obvious. This play has no purpose except to be gay. As a contribution to English comedy, it ranks with the play of Sheridan. It ran in London even during the deepest disgrace of its author and appears now to have taken a sure place in the repertory of English stage classics. It is the funniest and most attractive play. It is a farce taking us into the realm of absurdity in an attempt to recover a lost innocence. Though laughter, it tries to purge us of sin and evil. It is the one and only play of Wilde that has not caused much disagreement among his modern-day readers and viewers.

The play derives its comedy from the two girls, Gwendolyn and Cecily believing themselves to be engaged / to the same man 'Ernest' and the two young men Jack and Algernon trying to get themselves christened as 'Ernest' by Dr. Chasuble who is willing to oblige them both. The high point of comedy is reached when Jack comes in mourning dress and enters his country seat after killing his imaginary brother 'Ernest' only to find that Algernon is 'Burn burying' there as his brother 'Ernest' and making love to his cousin Cecily. The question of Jack's parentage and the fact that he is a 'foundling' left in a hand-bag at Victoria station and the final revelation that he is the own brother of Algernon provide brilliant opportunities for Wilde to unleash several moments of non-stop fun and comicality. With the establishment in the plot are solved and the young lovers are happily married. Lady Bracknell, the mother of Gwendolyn provides excellent punch to this brilliant comedy by her inimitable character and pungency for brilliant wit and ironical humour. It is the most lighthearted of comedies. As Wilde has himself remarked that it is a play written by a butterfly to butterflies. It's nine characters are as enjoyable as they are altogether impossible, and if any one objects that the two young men Algernon Moncrieff and John Worthing, are no more individual or differentiated than Cecily and Gwendolyn whom they love, well, the same might be said the two

pairs of lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which still remains the most magical romantic fantasy in the English language.

Wilde called *The Importance of Being Earnest* 'a trivial comedy for serious people'. His further analysis of the play does not go very deep 'The first act is ingenious', he said, 'the second beautiful, the third abominably clever'. The fact remains that, with all its absurdities of story, character and situation, it is consummately well-constructed play, in which plot and sub-plot, past and present, obstacles, twists and denouements are slipped into place as delicately and skillfully as the paper-thin slices in one of the Lane's celebrated cucumber sandwiches.

But above all, it is by its wit that *The Importance of Being Earnest* has won its place among the classics. It must be one of the wittiest plays ever written.

3.2 Presentation of subject matters:

3.2.1 Section I

3.2.1.1 *The Importance of Being Earnest*

- a) Dramatist: Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)
[Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde]
- b) Type of work: Farcical comedy / comedy of manners
- c) Publication: August-September 1894 Time: Victorian Era
- d) First performance: 14th Feb. 1895 at the St. James Theatre, London.
- e) Type of Plot: Misunderstanding over the name Earnest.
- f) Themes:
 - i) A satire on the so-called earnestness
 - ii) The importance of the name Ernest
 - iii) Discovering the past
 - iv) Childlike innocence
 - v) Nonsense
 - vi) Predetermination
- g) Style: Wittiest Comedy, Witty dialogue
- h) Language: humorous

- i) Tone: Farcical
- j) Protagonist: Jack Worthing (John)

3.2.1.2 Life and Works of Oscar Wilde:

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin on 16th October 1854. His father, Sir William, was an eminent eye-surgeon and his mother Lady Wilde was a poetess. Oscar was educated at Portora Royal School and Trinity College, Dublin. In 1875, he won a scholarship to Magdalena College, Oxford, where he subsequently took a first class honours in classical Moderations and Literate Humaniores.

At Oxford, he picked up a reputation for wit, charm and conversational prowess. He came under the influence of two eminent writers on art and its relation to life, John Ruskin and Walter Pater. The close of his Oxford career was marked by two triumphs - his first-class degree and Newdigate Prize for his poem 'Ravenna'. He published a collected volume of his poems in 1881. He set about marking himself a name in the fashionable artistic and literary words. He declared that the highest beauty manifests itself in art, but he considered that everything created by human beings was a kind of art. He felt that dress is of supreme importance. Wilde's Lecture-tour to USA made him a great deal of badly needed money. He fell in love with a charming Constance Lloyd and the two got married.

He was damn against exercise and games and loved to grow long hair and decorate his room with flowers. It was during this period that he was drawn to the theory called *Arts for Art's Sake* and he became a staunch advocate of it.

Oscar Wilde was a great artist. He was a lover of beauty both in life and art. Even his homosexuality is an outcome of his worship of male beauty. As a follower of Walter Pater, Wilde also believed that modern human nature is largely evil. Like Walter Pater, he found a strange beauty in evil and believed that this life should be lived completely and as fully as possible. Again like Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde believed that the highest pleasure is to be found in art.

He was a great intellectual, a brilliant and vivacious conversationalist. His fame and personality was so gripping that he was invited for Lecture-tours in America. He was tender-hearted, nice, broad-minded and a lover of everything beautiful. He was Christ like a world of selfishness, meanness and jealousy. He is a social critic. He is for individual freedom and individual dignity. He became a victim of Victorian

Philistinism and class-prejudices rather than his own supposed penal offence of Sodomy.

Like Lord Byron, Wilde was a lover of children and both exerted a strong influence on women. His love of flowers and interest in both male and female dress were allied with a robust physique, physical courage, intellectual, brilliance and a devastating wit to give him a position of artistic and social domination.

A Brief Survey of the major works:

Oscar Wilde is an all-rounder. Wilde has a wonderful-novel '*The Picture of Dorian Gray*' in his name. He has published two collections of short-stories, four collections of poetry and ten plays. He is better known as a dramatist. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is his best play. His fame as a writer rests today on his novel and three major plays: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *An Ideal Husband*.

Wilde's Poems:

His poem '*Ravenna*' (1878) won Newdigate Prize. In 1881, he published an anthology of verses '*Poems*'. In 1891, '*The Harlot's House*' created much adverse response as it dealt. *The Sphinx* (1894), gives hints of development. His fabulous, antiquarian imagery is used slightly in this cat poem. In his '*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*' (1898), the rich and the finest artistic expression is born out of his experience in Reading Gaol. He wrote this poem under the name of C33. This is Wilde's prison number.

Wilde's short-stories:

He brought out his first collection of short stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* in 1888. This was followed three years later Lord Arthur Seville's *Crime and other stories*. The ideas expressed are usually pessimistic. His naturally sunny disposition, happy sense of humour, the sheer beauty of his craftsmanship redeems the cruelty or sadness of the theme. His short-stories may still be read with delight.

Wilde's Novel:

His success with his short-stories encouraged him to attempt something more ambitious. In 1891, his first and last Novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* appeared. The main theme of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the relationship between beauty and morality. He plays on the Renaissance idea of the correspondence between the

physical and spiritual realms: beautiful people are moral people; ugly people are immoral people. 'Give a man a mask, he will tell you the truth. So, the two characters in the story are Wilde himself. Dorian Gray is the first of Wilde's writing in which the theme of homosexuality, while never expressed is clearly implied.

Wilde's Critical Essays:

In 1891, he brought out the book entitled, *Intentions* which contains a collection of four of his critical essays. It contains the following four essays:

- 1) *The Truth of Masks*
- 2) *The Decay of Lying*
- 3) *Pen, Pencil and Poison.*
- 4) *The critic as Artist.*

This volume enables us to gain first-hand knowledge about his critical theories. 'The doctrine of Art-For Art's Sake' as Wilde expressed it, is by no means so absurd as it has been supposed to be *The Critic as Artist* or *The Decay of Lying* are many brilliant aperçus.

Wilde's Epistle to Lord Alfred Douglas:

In 1897, he was in prison, he wrote *De Profundis*, which is both a literary document and a letter of Lord Alfred Douglas. He points out how Alfred Douglas has brought disgrace and downfall to him. This long letter to Douglas is his apologia and a general confession.

The Plays of Wilde:

- i) ***Vera or The Nihilists: (1880):*** It is a play in four Acts. It deals with the growing revolutionary movement (Nihilism) in imperialist Russia.
- ii) ***The Duchess of Padua (1908):*** It is a tragedy in five acts, written in blank verse. It was written for the actress Mary Anderson in early 1883. It tells the story of a young man named Guido who was left in the charge of man he calls his uncle as a baby.
- iii) ***Salome:*** It is a one-act play based on an episode in the Bible. It was originally written in French and staged in Paris as license was not granted for it in England. The play was later translated into English by Lord Alfred Douglas.

This is Wilde's most terrifying and evil play. It is also a highly symbolic and complex work. In this play, Wilde presents Salome as a symbol of human nature.

- iv) ***Lady Windermere's Fan (1892)***: It is a brilliant comedy in Four acts. In a very real sense, the play is a joke on the Victorian Public, since it repeats the basic theme of Wilde's novel that human nature is grey. It tells the story of the high-spirited and proud heroine who gives her name to the title of the piece.
- v) ***A woman of No Importance (1893)***: It is also a comedy in four acts. It has a general atmosphere of social protest, not only in the satirical and bitter attitude towards the upper classes, but also the social problem of the inequality of men and women in the modern society. The theme is partly imbued with that sentimentality which in a character like Wilde's always underlines his more obvious cynicism.
- vi) ***An Ideal Husband (1895)***: It is a comedy in four acts. But it is longer and less witty than the earlier play. It represents an even more open attack on the social system than the previous play does. Its basic theme is the innate corruption of political life.
- vii) ***The Importance of Being Earnest***: It is Wilde's funniest and attractive play. It is also the most poignant play. Originally, the play was written in four acts. But at the request of the play's director, Alexander, Wilde shortened the play by dropping the third Act of his original version.

It is a comic masterpiece. The theme is entirely fantastic where the weaknesses of Wilde become less obvious. This play has no purpose except to be gay. It is a farce taking us into the realm of absurdity in an attempt to recover a lost innocence. Through laughter, it tries to purge us of sin and evil.

The play derives its comedy from the two girls, Gwendolyn and Cecily believing themselves to be engaged / to the same man 'Ernest' and the two young men Jack and Algernon trying to get themselves christened as 'Ernest' by Dr. Chasuble who is willing to oblige them both. The high point of comedy is reached when Jack comes in mourning dress and enters his country seat after killing his imaginary brother 'Ernest' only to find that Algernon is 'burn burying' there as his brother 'Ernest' and making love to his cousin Cecily. The question of Jack's parentage and the fact that he is a 'foundling' left in a hand-bag at Victoria station and the final

revelation that he is the own brother of Algernon provide brilliant opportunities for Wilde to unleash several moments of non-stop fun and comicality. With the establishment in the plot are solved and the young lovers are happily married. Lady Bracknell, the mother of Gwendolyn provides excellent punch to this brilliant comedy by her inimitable character and pungency for brilliant wit and ironical humour.

The End:

While in prison, Wilde composed a long, bitter letter to Douglas, later published under the title *De Profundis*. Shortly after his release, he completed the famous narrative poem. *The Ballad of Reading Goal*. On his release on 19th May 1897, he took up residence in France where he lived under the name of "Sebastian Melmoth". Wilde published nothing new after his imprisonment. He did arrange for the publication of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband* which appeared in 1899. The affair with Douglas was revived and continued sporadically. They led a nomadic life on the continent, Wilde chronically in debt in spite of the good offices of his friends. His allowance from his wife Constance was cut off when he resumed living with Douglas. His plays were not yet being revived in England and his published works brought in little by way of royalties. Disappointment, poverty, ignominy and disease culminated in his death on Nov. 30, 1900. In 1905, an apology for his life was published posthumously. The day before his death, he becomes a Roman Catholic. As pointed out by Frank Harris (Friend and Biographer of Oscar Wilde).

"Oscar Wilde's greatest play was his own life. It was a veritable tragedy in five acts, the first three covering his splendid achievements and the last two depicting his trial, incarceration and death.

3.2.1.3 The Title of the Play:

The title of the play, '*The Importance of Being Earnest*' is a typical wildean firework giving a clue as to the light nature of the comedy. The title of the play derives its punch based on a pun on the word 'Earnest' and its pronunciation as 'Ernest'. In the former connotation, it means serious or determined. In the latter connotation, it stresses the importance or the necessity of bearing the name Ernest. Much of the complications of this splendid comedy arise out of the confusions and misunderstanding caused on account of the fictional identity created for his own

convenience under the pseudonym 'Ernest' by the hero of the play, Jack Worthing. By a stranger twist of the plot, this non-existent 'Ernest' gains real life and gets merged with the hero, Jack and solves the complications standing in the way of the twin marriages of Jack and Algernon.

The title of the play is full of pun and the hint of mock seriousness. It suggests the farcical nature of the plot. The plot turns on a misconception over the name Ernest. The theme is an attack on earnestness, that is, the Victorian priggishness, hypocrisy and false sense of class consciousness.

The sub title of the play:

The sub title of the play is '*A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*'. It is exquisitely trivial; a delicate bubble of fancy and it has its philosophy. The weakness and foibles of the Victorian aristocratic society of his days are the targets of Wilde. His play is a comedy of manners. The sub-title wittily suggests that though the theme is treated very trivially, it is by no means trivial, and as such it is a fit fare for the serious-minded people.

1.2.1.4 Story of the play:

The play is built on a pun and the plot turns on misunderstanding over the name Ernest. The theme is a satire on the so-called earnestness.

Algernon Moncrieff, nephew of the aristocratic Lady Bracknell, is compelled by necessity to live a double life, or he will have been completely at the mercy of his Aunt Augusta. To escape from her unbearably dull dinner parties, he has invented a wholly fictitious friend named Bunbury, whose precarious state of health requires Algy's absence from London whenever his aunt summons him to attendance.

Algernon's friend, Jack Worthing, is also forced by circumstances into a similar trick for quite a different reason. He has under his care a young ward named Cecily Cardew, who lives at Jack's country house in Hertfordshire under the admirable care of a stern governess, Miss Prism. Jack finds it necessary to preserve a high moral tone in the presence of Cecily and her governess. To escape from this atmosphere of restraint, he invents an imaginary brother named Erest, who is supposed to be quite a reprobate and whose name and general mode of behavior Jack assumes during his occasional trips to London.

To complicate matters, Jack has fallen in love with Gwendolyn Fairfax, the daughter of Algy's aunt, Lady Bracknell. Moreover, Gwendolyn has fallen in love with him, particularly taking a fancy for his name, Ernest. When Lady Bracknell learns Ernest's intentions towards Gwendolyn, she naturally wants to know something of his family history. But since Ernest can supply nothing more definite than the fact that he had been found in a leather bag at the Victoria railway station, and that his true parentage is quite unknown, Lady Bracknell refuses to consider his marriage to her daughter.

Jack realizes that the time has come to put an end to Ernest. He even goes so far as to appear at the manor house in Hertfordshire in deep mourning for his brother Ernest. But his friend Algy, 'Bunburying' as usual, has preceded him, posing as Ernest. Cecily takes an immediate interest in Algy, the supposed brother of her guardian. When Jack and Algy came face to face, Jack promptly announces that his brother Ernest has been unexpectedly called back to London and is leaving at once. But Algy, having fallen in love with Cecily, refuses to leave. Cecily, in turn, confesses that it has always been her dream to love someone whose name is Ernest.

Algy, realizing that his hopes of marrying Cecily depend on his name, decides to have himself rechristened Ernest, and to this effect, he calls upon the Local clergyman, the Reverend Canon Chasuble. But Jack has preceded him with a similar request. Dr. Chasuble has an engagement for two christenings at five-thirty that afternoon.

In the meantime, Gwendolyn arrives at the manor house. Because of the mix-up in names, both Gwendolyn and Cecily believe that they are in love with the same man, the non-existent Ernest.

When Jack and Algy appear together, the real identities of the two humbugs are established. Both girls become furious. At first, Jack and Algy indulge in a mutual recrimination for their duplicity, but they finally settle down to tea and console themselves by vying with each other to see who can eat the last muffin on the plate. Cecily and Gwendolyn at last decide to forgive their suitors, after Algy has admitted that the purpose of his deception is to meet Cecily and Jack has mentioned that his imaginary brother is an excuse to go to London to see Gwendolyn. Both girls agree that in matters of grave importance - such as marriage - style and not sincerity is the vital thing.

Lady Bracknell arriving in search of her daughter, discovers her nephew engaged to Cecily. Afraid that the girl, like her guardian Jack Worthing, may possibly have only railway station antecedents Lady Bracknell demands to know Cecily's origin. She is informed that Cecily is the grand-daughter of a very wealthy man and the heiress to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. When she willingly gives her consent to the marriage, Jack refuses to allow the match, pointing out that Cecily cannot marry without his consent until she is thirty-five as per the will of her grandfather. However, he says he will give his consent the moment Lady Bracknell approves of his marriage to Gwendolyn.

There are, however, some objections to Jack as a suitable husband for Gwendolyn, the main one being the question of his parentage. But, the mystery is cleared up to Lady Bracknell's satisfaction by the revelation that Miss Prism, Cecily's governess was the nurse who had left Lord Bracknell's house with a perambulator containing a male infant. Miss Prism by oversight had placed them in fact in a leather handbag and left it in the cloakroom of the Victoria station. Jack is found to be that infant lost by Miss Prism and the son of Lady Bracknell's sister. This makes Jack Algy's elder brother. Jack's Christian name still has to be determined. It turns to be 'Ernest'. The Reverend Chasuble is relieved of his two christenings that afternoon and Gwendolyn is happy that she is actually going to marry a man named Ernest.

3.2.1.5 Characters and Places mentioned in the Play:

1) John Worthing, J.P. (called Jack in the play): The Protagonist, is a member of the upper class. He has a double identity. He resides in his country Manor House at Woolton in Hertfordshire. He has invented a younger brother Ernest, in order to facilitate occasional trips from his home in the country to London in order to visit his friend, Algernon Moncrieff and his lady friend Gwendolyn Fairfax. He is in love with her and seeks her hand in marriage.

[The suffix J.P. indicates that John Worthing is a justice of the Peace (Magistrate) in the country]

2) Algernon Moncrieff: He is a very frivolous member of the upper classes. He lives in London, a young gentleman, where he is constantly watched over by his ultra respectable aunt, Lady Bracknell. He has invented a permanent invalid friend Bunbury, the nephew of Lady Bracknell, in love with Cecily Cardew, the ward of Jack Worthing.

3) **Lady Bracknell:** is an Algernon Moncrieff's aunt, a society lady and the Gwendolen Fairfax's mother. She is typical Victorian woman. She strongly opposes the marriage of Gwendolen and Jack until she finally comes to know that Jack is the long-lost child of her own sister, Mrs. Moncrieff.

4) **Gwendolen Fairfax:** is Lady Bracknell's young daughter and Algernon's cousin. She is a light-headed young woman. She is in love with Jack Worthing, chiefly on account of his assumed name, Ernest.

5) **Cecily Cardew:** is Jack's beautiful 18 years old ward. She lives at Manor House, Woolton, and Hertfordshire. She loves Algernon and has accepted his proposal. She is eager to meet her Uncle Jack's wicked younger brother Ernest.

6) **The Rev. Canon Dr. Chasuble:** is the pompous rector of Jack Worthing's country-parish. He strictly follows the rules of the primitive church as regards matrimony and so is to celebrate. He has a nonsensical passion for the unattractive Miss Prism. In the play, he undertakes to christen both Jack and Algy. In the end he marries Miss Prism.

7) **Miss Prism:** is Cecily's governess. She had once been employed in a similar capacity by Lady Bracknell's sister Mrs. Moncrieff. She is in love with the Rev. Dr. Chasuble and tries to persuade him to marry her successfully.

8) **Lane** - Algernon's butler.

9) **Merriman,** is Jack Worthing's butler.

10) **Mr. Bunbury** - a Fictional character invented by Algernon.

11) **Ernest Worthing** - a fictional name invented by Jack.

❖ **Places:** -

i) **Half-moon Street:** It is a street in Mayfair, most beautiful fashionable part in London. Here Algernon has flat.

ii) **The Manor House Woolton:** It is the country-home of Jack. It is situated in the country of Hertfordshire.

3.2.1.6 Plot Construction of the Play:

Oscar Wilde is able to carry out audiences through a well-knit plot with its sudden surprises, turns and twists dovetailed (joined) with a couple of sub-plots leading to a happy resolution towards the end of the play.

The play originally designed in a Four Acts. But at the suggestion of Alexander, actor-manager of St. Jame's Theatre, the entire third act was dropped and the play was re-structured in its three-act version. As per Wilde's own assessment of the play's construction, the first act is ingenious, the second beautiful and the third abominably clever. This is fully justified as the first act makes a proposition of the problem of the play, the second act leads to the complications of the same reaching to a climax and the third act very deftly unravels the complications leading to a happy resolution.

The first act sets in Algy's luxurious flat in Half Moon street in London. He is a rich idler and a frivolous bachelor. He is leading a double life. He goes frequently to the country to seek pleasure under the excuse of seeing his imaginary brother 'Bunbury' who is chronically ill. Jack has his home in the country. But he has a flat in London. Like Algy, Jack also leads a double life. In the country, he is known to be Jack Worthing. In London, he is known as Ernest Worthing. Jack Worthing is also the guardian of Cecily, the grand- daughter of his late godfather, Thomas Cardew.

Jack visits Algy in London as he has fallen in love with Gwendolen. The cigarette-case left behind by Jack during his previous visit. The first act sets the ball rolling. It strikes the proper key-note of this exquisite comedy arising out of the confusions caused by the name 'Ernest'. It also introduces the major characters, Jack, Algy, Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell.

The second act takes us to the country Manor House of Jack at Woolton in Hertfordshire. In addition to complicating the problems posed in the first act, it also introduces the first sub-plot dealing with the love affair of Algy and Cecily and the second sub-plot dealing with the love affair of Miss Prism with Rev. Chasuble.

The third act finds the two ladies, Gwendolen and Cecily ready to pardon their suitors on knowing the cause of their deception being nothing but an ardent desire to meet their beloved Lady Bracknell who is not willing to consent to his questionable parentage. Finally, she knows everything about Jack from Miss Prism. Dr. Chasuble

also gets entangled into wedlock with Miss Prism. Thus, the third act very skillfully unravels all the complications and brings the play to a happy end.

The title also suggests the farcical nature of the plot. Wilde has constructed his plot out of improbable action, odd and bizarre coincidence, and incredible characters. The entire play deals with petty things such as cucumber sandwiches, muffins and tea-cakes, about a couple of gentlemen and ladies. It is full of trivial episodes, such as the cigarette-case episode and the hand-bag episode.

Thus, the play is constructed on the strength of a pun between 'Earnest' and 'Ernest' and the plot turns on a misconception over the name 'Ernest'.

3.2.1.7 Themes of *The Importance of Being Ernest* :

It lends itself to quite a few themes both by suggestion and by implications. It is built on a pun and the plot turns on a misunderstanding over the name Ernest. The theme of play stresses upon the importance of the name 'Ernest'.

Jack invents a wicked brother living in London, under the name 'Ernest'. He goes to London under the excuse of meeting his brother but his real purpose is to seek pleasure there. He falls in love with Gwendolen. She falls for Jack taking a fancy for his name Ernest. Even Cecily has a heady attraction towards Jack's wicked brother Ernest. So, Jack decides to kill his imaginary brother 'Ernest' to avoid complication. Algernon goes to Jack's country home under the guise of Jack's brother Ernest, to win the love of Cecily. When Jack returns to the country, mourning the death of his brother 'Ernest', he is shocked to find Algy courting Cecily posing as Ernest. Gwendolen surprised to learn that her love 'Ernest' has been engaged to Cecily. This leads to a quarrel between the two young ladies. Finally, when they meet their respective lovers, they come to know that there is no 'Ernest'. Though they become angry with their suitors, soon they forgive them.

As both the ladies are keen on marrying only 'Ernest', Algy and Jack are ready to get themselves christened Ernest. Miss Prism reveals the truth that Jack is the long-lost child of Mrs. Moncrieff, the sister of Lady Bracknell. Jack finds out that he and Algernon are the sons of late Major General, Ernest John Moncrieff. So, he finds himself to be a natural Ernest. As Jack and Algernon are found to be Ernests, they are able to marry Gwendolen and Cecily. Thus the importance of being 'Ernest' is realized both as Jack and Algy.

It is a comedy of manners; we can find that the theme is essence as a satire on the so called earnestness. The intention is a hit at the Victorian solemnity or a false seriousness which results in priggishness, hypocrisy and so-called piety. Wilde uses his wit as an ironic counter point to the absurdity of the action.

Jack and Algy having double identities and leading a frivolous life, they all had two faces, one public and the other private. Behind the mask of Jack and Algy, 'Ernest' and 'Bunburys', Gwendolen and Cecily are frivolous as their suitors. They do not choose their life partners for their personality or character but for their name 'Ernest'. Through their characters, Wilde satirizes how noble notions of love become topsy-turvy in the hands of aristocratic young ladies with foolish fads. Through Lady Bracknell, Wilde satirizes the uncompromising arrogance and class-consciousness of his time. Dr. Chasuble's character is used to expose the ignorance and hypocrisy of the clergy. Miss Prism is used as a symbol of false modesty and pretensions knowledge. Thus, we find that the play is a trivial play intended for serious people.

'*Discovering the past*' is one of the themes of the play. Jack is blue-blooded, but he has no social status as he is a founding brought up by his guardian, late Thomas Cardew. Jack is found to be child lost long ago, Miss Prism, who left with the child in a perambulator. Lady Bracknell had placed the child in her hand-bag and the manuscript of her novel in the perambulator. Later, she had left the handbag containing the child in the cloak-room of Victoria railway station. This handbag was given by mistake to Thomas Cardew. He brought Jack and made him the guardian of his grand-daughter Cecily by his will.

Jack also finds that his Christian name is 'Ernest'. Algernon is found to be his own blood-brother. These discoveries enable Wilde to resolve the complications of the plot. Predetermination is found to unfold itself as another theme of the play. The play captures the world of childlike innocence. Jack says: Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. In these lines, it is clear, Jack refers to himself as a baby and he is a twenty-nine-year-old baby who never really grew up. The other characters in the play are also babies. Though physically adults, mentally and psychologically, they are still in the paradise of childhood. There they are innocently and joyfully imitating the behavior of real adults. Wilde creates a hilarious nonsensical world that returns us to the innocence of childhood. The play unfolds itself into several themes.

3.2.1.8 Check your Progress

- 1) Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a _____.
 - a) romantic
 - b) sentimental comedy
 - c) tragic-comedy
 - d) comedy of manners
- 2) There are _____ pairs of lovers in the play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
 - a) Three
 - b) Four
 - c) Five
 - d) Two
- 3) Cecily Cardew will get her property at the age _____.
 - a) Twenty-five
 - b) Eighteen
 - c) Twenty
 - d) Twenty-two
- 4) The term 'Ernest' means a _____.
 - a) comic
 - b) serious
 - c) funny
 - d) tragic
- 5) _____ is the fictitious Friend of Algy.
 - a) Ernest
 - b) Jack
 - c) John
 - d) Bunbury
- 6) _____ railway station was Jack discovered by his Forster- Father.
 - a) Moon Street
 - b) Victoria
 - c) Manor House
 - d) Hertfordshire
- 7) _____ was the name of Jack's Foster-Father.
 - a) Lady Brackness
 - b) Mrs. Moncrieff
 - c) Mr. Fairfax
 - d) Sir Thomas Cardew
- 8) _____ is Miss Prism's first name.
 - a) Laticia
 - b) Messrs
 - c) Moncrieff
 - d) None of these
- 9) Jack Worthing is _____ years' old.
 - a) Twenty-five
 - b) Twenty-six
 - c) Twenty-nine
 - d) Twenty
- 10) _____ is Algy's Family name.
 - a) Worthing
 - b) Brackness
 - c) Moncrieff
 - d) Fairfax
- 11) The full name of Dr. Chasuble is _____

- a) Rev. Canon Dr. Chasuble b) Ret. Canon Dr. Chasuble
c) Rtn. Canon Dr. Chasuble d) None of these
- 12) *The Importance of Being Earnest* is written in three weeks during a family holiday at working in August-September _____.
- a) 1899 b) 1894 c) 1897 d) 1896
- 13) _____ is Cecily's governess
- a) Gwendolon b) Miss Prism c) Lady Brackness d) none of these
- 14) Cecily is _____ years old.
- a) Sixteen b) Eighteen c) Nineteen d) Twenty
- 15) _____ was the common request of Jack and Algy to Dr. Chasuble.
- a) To christen them as Ernest b) To marry with their beloved
c) To help them to get property d) None of these
- 16) Miss Prism deposits her bag in _____
- a) The cloak-room of Victoria station
b) City of London
c) Half Moon Street
d) The Manor House Woolton.
- 17) _____ a fictional name invented by Jack.
- a) Bunbury b) Ernest Worthing
c) Earnest d) Merriman
- 18) The Manor House Woolton is situated in the country of _____
- a) England b) America
c) Hertfordshire d) Half Moon Street
- 19) Algernon's butler is _____
- a) Merriman b) Lane c) Miss Prism d) Dr. Chasuble
- 20) Jack's butler is _____

- a) Lane b) Merriman c) Miss Prism d) Chasuble
- 21) Gwendolen Fairfax's mother is _____
- a) Mrs. Moncrieff b) Lady Bracknell
c) Miss Prism d) Dr. Chasuble
- 22) Lady Bracknell's daughter is _____
- a) Gwendolen b) Cecily
c) Prism d) None of these
- 23) _____ amount has been left for Cecily investment by Cecily's grandfather.
- a) £ 1,30000 b) £ 30,000 c) £ 1,300 d) £ 13,000
- 24) Bracknell's sister find _____ in the pram.
- a) a three volume manuscript of a novel
b) a two volume manuscript of a novel
c) a five volume manuscript of a novel
d) a volume manuscript of a play
- 25) The butler gives a visiting card of _____ to Cecily.
- a) Ernest Worthing b) Jack c) Algy d) Lady Bracknell

3.2.2 Section II: Detailed Act wise Summary of '*The Importance of Being Earnest*' with critical comments

3.2.2.1 ACT 1:

The opening scene is laid in the morning-room of Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Half-Moon Street, London. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The play opens on a quite note with the sound of a piano coming from an adjoining room. In the meanwhile, Lane, Algernon's manservant, is arranging afternoon tea.

As soon as the music stops, Algernon Moncrieff enters. He tells Lane that in music, he cares for sentiment and fine expression rather than accuracy and reserves the science of accuracy for the business of day-to-day life. He then enquires to Lane if he has got the cucumber sandwiches for his Aunt Augusta readied. Lane tells his

master that they are ready. Algernon while testing a couple of the sandwich slices questions Lane about the eight bottles of champagne that had been consumed by the servants and others during the visit of Lord Shoreman and Ernest Worthing on Thursday last. Lane admits that the superior quality of the wines supplied in a bachelor establishment often tempts the servants to consume what may be left. Algernon then wonders if marriage is so demoralizing as to make one go in for inferior quality of wine and other victuals. Lane contradicts his master saying that marriage is a pleasant state. However, he is not much experienced to comment on marriage because he has been married only once and too out of a misunderstanding between him and a young woman. Lane goes out and Algernon feels that Lane's view of marriage is too very lenient and he is sorry that the lower orders (i.e. the servants) do not have a sense of moral responsibility as they do not set up a good precedent for higher orders (i.e. the masters) to follow.

Jack Worthing enters. He is announced as "Mr. Ernest Worthing". He has come from the country for seeking pleasure in London. He is greeted warmly by Algernon who believes that Jack's country-home is situated in Shrosphire. On questioning Algernon about the elaborate preparations for tea, Jack learns that Algernon's aunt and cousin, Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen are expected for tea. Algernon warns "Ernest" that his aunt will not approve of his presence on account of his flirtation with cousin Gwendolen. Indeed, we learn also that Jack is not merely in love with Gwendolen but has come to London with the chief purpose of proposing to her. Algernon refuses his consent to their marriage till "Ernest" explains his relationship with Cecily. Jack denies that he knows anyone by that name. But Algernon is in possession of a cigarette-case which Jack has left behind in the smoking-room during his last visit to Algernon. Algernon finds the cigarette-case to be a gift from "little Cecily" to her "dear Uncle Jack" with her "fondest love". Algernon produces the cigarette-case before Jack but refuses to return it to him as he is not Jack and further it is a gift from one Cecily whom Jack says that he does not know. At last Jack volunteers the information that Cecily is his aunt, who lives in Tunbridge Wells. Algernon pursues the chase hotly. When he asks, why she calls herself "little Cecily" Jack replies that aunts can be either tall or short. Algernon persists: why should Cecily say "her dear Uncle Jack", when she is his aunt and his name is Ernest? Algernon even produces a visiting-card to prove that Jack's name is Ernest. Now there is no escape. Jack has to explain that he is called Ernest in town and Jack in the

country. Algernon accuses him of being a "Bunburyist". It is a term which he promises to explain after Jack has told him why Cecily should call him Uncle.

On Jack promising to explain, Algernon duly returns the cigarette-case to Jack. Jack then explains how his foster-father, Mr. Thomas Cardew, had made him guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew, who lives at Jack's home under the tutelage of a governess, Miss Prism. As for his two names, Jack explains, it is a question of dignity. He has invented a younger brother, Ernest, who is always in trouble and who constantly needs Jack's help and presence to save him from a tight corner. By means of this deception, Jack can often invent an excuse for visiting London.

In return, Algernon explains the term "Bunburyist". He has invented "an invaluable permanent invalid" called Bunbury, to offer an excuse for his own occasional jaunts to the country. Jack says that Cecily is growing too much interest in Ernest, and thinks he will have to kill off this fictitious brother, once his proposal to Gwendolen is accomplished. He advises Algernon to dispose of Bunbury also. But Algernon is not willing to part with Bunbury.

Algernon coolly informs Jack that he intends to have dinner with him that night. He has been invited to dine with his aunt Augusta (Lady Bracknell). But he dreads it as she will treat him as a member of the family and place him beside Mary Farquhar, who is notorious for ever flirting with her own husband! He believes that it is enough if one dines with one's own family once a week. In the meanwhile, the sound of an electric bell is heard. Knowing that his aunt Augusta and her daughter Gwendolen have arrived, Algernon promises Jack to keep his aunt out of the way for ten minutes provided Jack agrees to take him to dinner at Willis's restaurant that night.

Lane announces Lady Bracknell and Miss Gwendolen Fairfax and both are warmly welcomed by Algernon. Gwendolen sits in a corner with Jack. Lady Bracknell offers her apologies for being late. She explains that she had to make a call on Lady Harbury who has recently lost her husband. When she mentions the dinner that night, Algernon excuses himself on the grounds that Bunbury is sick again. This news displeases Lady Bracknell, who considers that Bunbury is a most inconsiderate invalid. He should make up his mind whether he intends to live or die. She warns Algernon to tell Bunbury that he cannot fall ill on the following Saturday, as she

wants Algernon to arrange some music for her last reception of the season. Followed by Algernon, she sweeps from the room to discuss the proposed programme.

Left alone with Gwendolen, Jack, very nervously, opens a conversation about the weather. Realizing his timidity, Gwendolen teases him that such an opening gambit is a cover for a more serious topic to come. At once, Jack reveals his great admiration for Gwendolen. In turn, she admits that she has never been indifferent to him. Her ideal has always been to love someone with the name of Ernest. Jack asks her if she could still love him if his name was Jack! Jack, Gwendolen judges, does not suit him. It does not produce "vibrations" like Ernest. Ernest is a safe name. Whereas, Jack has "a notorious domesticity". Appreciating the situation, Jack carelessly remarks that he must be christened at once. But, after a time, he changes this to "be married!" Gwendolen thrills at his proposal and accepts him.

Lady Brackness re-enters to find Jack kneeling before her daughter, Gwendolen. The news of his engagement to Gwendolen is broken to her. After dismissing Gwendolen to the awaiting carriage, Lady Bracknell orders Jack to take a seat. She takes a pencil and note-book from her pocket. Jack, a suitor who is not even on her list of eligible young men, is subjected to a stream of questions. He admits that he smokes, is twenty-nine, earns between seven to eight thousand pounds a year from investments, owns a country-house with some land which is plundered by poachers, and a house on the unfashionable side in Belgrave Square that is left to Lady Bloxham, and that he is a Liberal Unionist. As for his parents, Jack replies that he has lost both. To Lady Brackness, to lose one parent is a misfortune, but to lose both parents is sheer carelessness! He does not know who his father was. He explains how he had been found in a large black leather hand-bag with handles to it, by one Mr. Thomas Cardew. He gave him the name of Worthing on account of his having a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. The bag had been given to Mr. Cardew in error at Victoria Station.

Lady Bracknell is horrified. Being found in a hand-bag reminds her of "the worst excesses of the French Revolution" and "could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society". Her advice to him is that he should find at least one parent before the season is out. As Jack is at a loss what to do, he assures her instead that he can produce the hand-bag. But Lady Bracknell retorts that she and her husband would never consent to their daughter "forming an alliance with a parcel!" Majestically she sweeps from the room.

Algernon now enters. Thinking that life has been kind to his friend Jack, he comes humming the "Wedding March" in anticipation. He is greeted instead by Jack's sad face and the story that Lady Bracknell is a "Gorgon" without a myth. For a moment, Jack muses on the possibility of Gwendolen growing into a person like her mother in a hundred-and-fifty years' time! Once again Algernon urges upon him the necessity of their having dinner. But Jack is too engrossed in his anxieties to be interested in an evening's entertainment.

Gwendolen returns. From her mother's expression after leaving Jack, she is afraid that they may never be married. Her mother has told her the story of Jack's origin. Gwendolen finds the story absolutely romantic one that "has naturally stirred the deeper fibres" of her nature. As Jack is anxious to keep in close touch with her, he gives her his country address: The Manor House, Woolton, and Hertfordshire. In the background, Algernon is secretly busy, writing the address on his shirt-cuff. While Jack is escorting Gwendolen to her carriage, Algernon informs Lane that he is going "Bunburying" the next day and his Bunbury-suits must be prepared. Jack re-enters and Algernon drops a hint of his future movements with he mentions that he is worried about Bunbury and that he himself does not dislike "scrapes". Jack is indignant. Algernon with a mischievous smile reads his shirt-cuff.

Critical Comments:

The play is witty comedy and the opening conversation between Algernon and his man-servant Lane on the subject of the poor quality of wine served in married people's establishments making Algernon expressing shock at the demoralizing effect of marriage on people strikes the proper key-note of the play with Lane's modesty. He is not much experienced to comment on marriage as he has been married only once and that too out of a misunderstanding him and a young girl.

The cigarette-case episode introduced in the first act, though trivial in nature, serves a very important expository purpose for the development of the plot. In addition to revealing the prying nature of Algernon, it helps to unravel the double-identity of Jack--Jack Worthing, a man of high moral rectitude and respectability in his country, Hertfordshire and Ernest, Worthing, a frivolous aristocratic bachelor seeking pleasure in London. This episode built with a series of witty outbursts both from Jack and Algernon provides the required comic fare in the scene and also prepares for the future comic fare in the succeeding acts arising out of the

misunderstandings and confusions caused by the name 'Ernest'. Thus, this episode begins the 'Ernest' theme of the play. It also throws more light on Jack and the members of his country-home at Woolton in Hertfordshire.

This episode also leads to Algernon coming out with the facts about his double identity. Algernon has another identity as 'Bunbury' whose chronic illness provides him (Algy) an excuse to make frequent jaunts to the country to seek pleasure. The double identities of Jack and Algernon enable Wilde to create the necessary complications in the plot leading to several farcical situations.

The first act also opens up the love episode of Jack Worthing and Gwendolen Fairfax on the main plot. It also prepares us for the love episode of Algernon and Cecily Cardew which is to follow, forming the sub-plot of the play. Lady Bracknell's questioning of Jack in order to ascertain his suitability to be chosen as her prospective son-in-law is one of the comic highlights of the play. We come to know that Jack is a foundling salvaged from a hand-bag given in error to his late foster-father. Thomas Cardew, who gave Jack, the name 'Worthing', as he had a first-class ticket for Worthing at the time. The anonymous parentage of Jack Worthing makes Lady Bracknell refuse her consent to him to marry her daughter Gwendolen as she and her husband do not want "to form an alliance with a (railway) parcel"! The hand-bag episode adds to the mystery of the plot which is to be solved later.

We have a comic irony when Algernon comes singing the "Wedding March", thinking that the affair of his friend Jack's proposal to Gwendolen has been happily confirmed. But he finds a sad and crest-fallen Jack whose chances of a happy marriage to Gwendolen are thwarted by the "Gorgon" Lady Bracknell. Algernon does not mind his relatives being abused in his presence. He rather enjoys it! While Jack is worried about his proposal to Gwendolen going haywire, Algy presses upon Jack to take him to Willis's for dinner. He is like Nero fiddling when Rome is burning. When Gwendolen and Jack feel sad about the unsympathetic attitude of Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen notes down the address of Jack in the country. Unnoticed by the two lovers, Algernon notes down Jack's country address in his shirt-cuff as he proposed to go "Bunburying" to Jack's Manor House at Woolton in Hertfordshire. Thus, the first act also prepares us for Algy's love affair with Cecily to follow in the second and third acts.

Jack tells Algy that he intends disposing of 'Ernest' as his ward Cecily has begun taking much interest on wicked Ernest. Algy suggests Jack to say that his brother Ernest has died of a bitter chill in Paris. But before Jack returns to his country-home, Algy goes there to woo Cecily in the guise of 'Ernest'. Thus, Algy cleverly runs with the hares and hunts with the hounds.

We are introduced to the hero, Jack, his friend Algernon, his beloved Gwendolen and her mother Lady Bracknell. All these characters are indicated by their brilliant dialogue which marks off their individual nature. Without exception all of them indulge in wit, epigrams and paradoxes which sparkle like the champagne served in Algernon's bachelor-establishment.

3.2.2.2 ACT II:

It is July. The scene is laid in the garden at the Manor House, Woolton, and Hertfordshire. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, is full of roses. Basket chairs and table, covered with books are set under a large yew-tree. Miss Prism, Cecily Cardew's governess, is seated at the table, while Cecily is at the back watering flowers.

Miss Prism chides Cecily for doing the gardener's work at a time when her German lesson awaits. Cecily thinks German as unbecoming language and feels that the study of it makes her plain. But Miss Prism reminds that her guardian, Jack has stressed its importance. When Cecily questions her Uncle Jack's seriousness, Miss Prism replied that he enjoys not only the best of health but also a high sense of duty and responsibility, and idle jesting has no place in his conversation. Further, he is continually anxious about his younger brother, Ernest. Cecily feels that it is a shame that Ernest is kept away from their house. She is certain that, if Uncle Jack allowed him to visit them, they might be able to exercise some good influence over him, and Miss Prism's knowledge particularly would be of value to him. Miss Prism disagrees. Further, she disapproves of the modern mania of turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. Attempting to change the subject, she reprimands Cecily for her keeping a diary in which Cecily asserts, she records all the wonderful secrets of her life. Cecily should depend purely on memory, states Miss Prism. The governess once wrote a three-volume novel but the manuscript has unfortunately been lost.

Dr. Chasuble, the local Rector, approaches. He is warmly welcomed by Miss Prism. Cecily, anticipating a break from study, suggests that, as Miss Prism is

suffering from a headache, she should take a short walk with the Canon. Jack's visit to London is mentioned. The Rector says that "He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment," when Miss Prism decides to take a walk with him as far as the Schools. Cecily is given her Political Economy to study.

Merriman, Jack's butler, brings Cecily a card inscribed "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W" and is told to bring the visitor to her. The visitor is none other than Algernon, under the assumed name of Ernest. He is very gay and debonair and greets Cecily as his little cousin. Cecily is amazed to see the notorious Ernest in person. She is somewhat disappointed when he denies that he has been at all wicked. But his admission that he might have been rather reckless reassures her a little. On being informed that Uncle Jack returns on Monday, Algernon regrets that he will not be able to stay to see him, as he will be returning on the first train that very day. But Cecily insists, he will have to stay to discuss the question of his emigrating to Australia and Uncle Jack has even gone to London to purchase his outfit. Emigration is not Algernon's idea of pleasure. He would prefer to be reformed by Cecily instead. He is invited into the house. On the way, although he has known Cecily for such a brief time, he takes the opportunity of telling her that she is like a pink rose.

Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble return from their walk, with Miss Prism urging him to get married as he is a permanent temptation to the public. She suggests a mature woman for him. Dr. Chasuble, however, declares that both the doctrine and the practice of the Primitive Church were clearly against the priests getting married. Jack enters from the back of the garden. He is incongruously dressed in deep mourning, with a crepe hat-band and black gloves. Overwrought with affection emotion, he announces that the untimely death of his brother is the cause of his grief. Ernest has died of a severe chill in Paris. Characteristic of him, he expressed a wish to be interred there. Dr. Chasuble shares Jack's grief. He endeavours to extend to him some comfort by promising to allude to his personal tragedy in his next sermon. The mention of Sunday and the sermon prompt Jack to inquire if the Canon knows how to christen satisfactorily. He is assured by the Canon of his efficiency and regular practice. Jack asks the Canon to christen him that same afternoon if at all possible! He explains that he doubts whether he has been christened already and they agree to hold the ceremony at 5.30. The Rector assures him that a mere sprinkling is what is all needed and so he need not fear an immersion.

Cecily now runs into the garden to spread the news of Ernest's arrival. Poor Jack is nonplussed by the news. The others are amazed at the sudden revival of the dead! But Algernon appears. At once he begins to apologize to Jack for his sinful life and offers his hand, which is curtly refused. This show of hostility by Jack so astonishes Cecily that she declares she cannot understand how anyone could be unkind to someone who has been so generous to a poor invalid like Bunbury. Jack forbids Algernon to talk to anyone about Bunbury. Algernon pretends to be surprised by Jack's coldness. But, ultimately, Cecily succeeds in making them shake hands. They all go into the house, except Jack and Algernon. Jack is informed by the butler that he has put all of Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to his. Although Algernon has already informed Merriman that he intends staying there for a week. Merriman is peremptorily instructed by Jack to order the dog-cart at once. Algernon pretends to be mystified by his brother's hostility. Although Jack tells him that he is to leave on the 4.05 train that afternoon, he pleads that he just could not go away, leaving Jack in a state of mourning. However, he promises to leave if Jack discards his mourning clothes.

Cecily enters at the back of the garden and begins to tend the flowers. She is informed of Algernon impending departure and Merriman comes to announce that the dog-cart is ready. Algernon realizing that his stay cannot be prolonged tells Cecily that she is "the visible personification of absolute perfection". The girl moves towards the table where she begins to enter his remark in the diary! Although he is anxious to see the diary, she conceals it with her hand, as it is "a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions meant for publication". As he continues to pour forth lavish compliments, she duly enters them in the diary.

Merriman again enters to inform Algernon that the dog-cart is waiting. He is told to bring it round again the following week at the same time.

Algernon is not at all perturbed by the possibility of Jack's anger. He is not enthusiastic about Cecily to be bothered by such trifles. Cecily now confides in Algernon that they have been engaged for three months. The engagement took place on 14th February. She entered in the diary and also brought a wedding ring and a bangle with a true lovers' knot. To Algernon's further amazement, she proceeds to show him the letters he has sent her. On 22nd of March, their engagement was broken off but she forgave him.

Now his name comes under discussion. Cecily too has always loved the name of Ernest, "a name that seems to inspire absolute confidence". The name of Algernon is most distasteful to her, in spite of Algernon's plea that it is not only a most aristocratic name but also one that is favoured by "half the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court." Algernon realizes his dilemma. After enquiring of Cecily if the local Rector is experienced in all the rites of the Church, he kisses her and rushes off to see the Canon on most urgent business - his own christening.

Miss Gwendolen Fairfax arrives to see Mr. Worthing on very important business. Cecily invites her into the house, as Mr. Worthing has gone in the direction of the Rectory. At first, the meeting is friendly, and each agrees to use the other's Christian name. Gwendolen is surprised that Cecily has never heard of her father, Lord Bracknell, and tentatively enquires if she is at the Manor House on a visit. When Cecily curtly informs her that she lives in the house under the guardianship of Mr. Worthing, Gwendolen is again surprised because Ernest has never told her of his ward and because Cecily is rather attractive. In fact, she says, she wishes that Cecily be forty-two and very plain, because even men like Ernest, the soul of righteousness, are, "susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others". Of course, Cecily is unaware of Jack's assumed name and assures her that she is the ward of Mr. Jack, not Ernest Worthing. But Gwendolen never knew that he had a brother. The situation rapidly deteriorates. Cecily now informs Gwendolen that the engagement of Mr. Ernest Worthing and her will be announced during the following week. Gwendolen counters this assertion by declaring that the engagement of herself and Ernest Worthing will be announced in the "Morning Post" on Saturday at the latest. Comparing notes, they find that Ernest has proposed to Cecily only ten minutes before, whereas he proposed to Gwendolen on the previous afternoon at 5.30. Cecily feels that Ernest has probably changed his mind and that the Gwendolen affair was an entanglement from which she will save him.

Merriman enters with a salver, table-cloth and plate stand. His presence prevents further discussions of Ernest, but the atmosphere is still tense. Their talk, now waspish in tone, ranges from walks to scenery, flowers to life in the country, even to whether is sugar is fashionable or not. Tea is served. But despite Gwendolen's request for bread and butter and tea with no sugar, Cecily has deliberately put sugar in her tea and given her cake. Gwendolen warns Cecily not to go too far. The gloves

are off. Gwendolen claims, the moment she saw Cecily, she distrusted her and felt she was false and deceitful.

At this heated stage, Jack enters and goes to kiss Gwendolen. As can be expected, she draws back and demands the meaning of his engagement to Cecily. He naturally denies that and they kiss. While Cecily coolly explains to Gwendolen that she is not kissing Ernest Worthing, but her guardian, Jack Worthing.

Algernon, who is the cause of the embarrassment, enters the room, and Cecily proudly introduces him as Mr. Ernest Worthing. But she refuses to accept his kiss till he can explain his engagement to Gwendolen. Algernon brushes off the misunderstanding as a frivolous joke, and so earns Cecily's kiss. But Gwendolen's claws are out and she reveals that he is not Ernest Worthing, but her cousin Algernon Moncrieff. The men are revealed in their real identities, Mr. Jack Worthing and Mr. Algernon Moncrieff. When they admit the truth, the two girls, the victims of the deception, embrace each other in sisterly comfort. Gwendolen enquires where his brother, Ernest, is, and Jack very slowly and hesitatingly admits that he has never had a brother.

Jack turns upon Algernon and attacks the folly of his stupid Bunburying. Recriminations follow. Jack stresses the timely demise of Bunbury, while Algernon emphasizes the disappearance of Ernest. Jack condemns Algernon for daring to make love to his ward, while Algernon scoffs at Jack for making love to his cousin. Neither feels that the other has not the slightest hope of marriage. Temporarily, the course of their argument is diverted by Jack's indignation at Algernon's eating muffins in the midst of their trouble. Algernon defends himself by claiming that he is eating them because he is unhappy. After taking the muffins from him, Jack advises him to leave the house at once. No, Algernon cannot leave without dinner. Further, Dr. Chasuble has promised to christen him that afternoon. This is too much for Jack, who informs him that he himself is going to be christened at 5.30. After all, argues Jack, Algernon has already been christened and he cannot enjoy the ceremony again. Algernon, however, feels that he is now used to it and that his constitution can stand it, whereas Jack, who has already lost a brother through a severe chill, should not venture upon such a dangerous experience. As the scene closes, the conversation degenerates once more into the ethics of eating muffins and tea-cakes.

Critical Comments:

This act introduces us to three more characters, namely, Cecily, Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble. This act also throws light on the very high impression that Jack has built upon the minds of Cecily. Miss Prism and the Rector, Chasuble for himself as a very somber and serious person who will have nothing to do with pleasure. This is a mask which Jack wears in the country as he is a frivolous pleasure seeker in secret in London under his other identity as Ernest. The hiatus between appearance and reality provides the necessary comic fare.

This act also introduces the emotional involvement between Miss Prism and the Canon, Dr. Chasuble. Miss Prism's walking trips with the Canon, in turn, are successfully used by the middle-aged governess to tempt the celibate Canon into marriage. Though the Canon says that marriage is prohibited to the clergy in the Primitive Church, the Canon has fallen into the net of love cast before him by Miss Prism irretrievably. So this act prepares for the final union of the two whose love in the afternoon blossoms into a marriage in the third act.

The arrival of Algernon to the Manor of Jack under the identity of Ernest Worthing, the younger brother of Jack, begins a series of comic complications which are essential for the development of the plot. This also begins the sub-plot of the play dealing with the love affairs of Algernon and Cecily. Algernon comes to know of the beautiful Cecily from the inscription of Jack's cigarette-case. He also learns of Cecily's interest in Ernest Worthing, the supposed wicked brother of Jack. To win the love of Cecily for him becomes a cake-walk for Algy as Cecily has already been building romantic castles in the air having taken a fancy for the name Ernest and felt a thrill at his supposed wicked nature. We can notice the element of parallelism in this episode. Gwendolen, like Cecily, falls in love with Jack as he is known to her only as Ernest. She has decided to marry only Ernest ever since her cousin Algy has told her that he has a friend by name Ernest Worthing. Much of the complications and confusions in this act are caused because of the name 'Ernest'.

One of the comic highlights of this act occurs when Jack appears in mourning for the death of his brother Ernest who died in Paris of chill. Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble offer their condolences to him and ask him to seek comfort in the fact that he has done his best for his wicked brother Ernest. Just at this moment, Cecily comes informing Jack that his younger brother Ernest is waiting inside to meet Jack. Miss

Prism is not able to reconcile to the fact of the wicked Ernest being revived alive. Chasuble is happy at the news. But Jack is shocked and surprised how a non-existent brother who is only the brain-child of his own imagination can come alive. The puzzle is solved when he meets Algernon inside posing his wicked younger brother Ernest. Algernon, a consummate master in the art of deceit plays his part as Ernest Worthing too well to the exasperation and embarrassment of Jack. Cecily succeeds in quelling down the frayed tempers between them for the time being.

The arrival of Gwendolen on the scene thickens the complications of the plot. Gwendolen is surprised to learn that Ernest has a beautiful ward, Cecily. But Cecily says that she is the ward of Jack Worthing and not Ernest Worthing, his younger brother. This is also equally surprising to Gwendolen for she does not know that Ernest has a brother as this information has been kept from her. She becomes shocked to learn that Cecily is engaged to Ernest. She tells Cecily that she has already been engaged to Ernest. As both of them are under the impression that their suitor is 'Ernest', they begin to quarrel throwing off the rules of polite conduct and polished friendship with which they began. The arrival of Jack and Algy shows the two men in their true colours. Gwendolen and Cecily learn to their disappointment that they have been loving Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff respectively and 'Ernest' does not exist at all. They now become friendly once again as companions of deceit and downfall.

Algernon and Jack left alone indulge in mutual recriminations. They learn from each other of the appointment of each with Canon Chasuble to rechristen themselves as "Ernest" as both Cecily and Gwendolen want to marry a person of the name 'Ernest'. Jack points out the absurdity of both of them getting christened as 'Ernest' and requests Algy to desist from doing so as he had already been christened once. But Algy asks Jack to withdraw from his effort as to save himself from the risk of catching a chill owing to the sprinkling of water during christening ceremony for only recently he has lost his brother from a deadly chill in Paris! The absurdity of double christening lends itself to a farcical situation leading to ineffable laughter.

At the end of the act, there is suspense as to what would happen to the two young girls Gwendolen and Cecily as they will marry none but an Ernest. But the fact remains, as far as this act is concerned, that there is no such person of the name of Ernest. There is also suspense as to the prospect of Jack and Algernon's marriages with their beloveds as they have proved themselves as Ernests is to be solved. As the

act comes to an end, we find the various strands of the plot getting entangled as if no distanglement is possible. Thus this second act prepares us for the third act for the successful resolution of the tangles of the main plot and the sub-plot.

From the point of view of characters, we find that the act provides sufficient clues as to understand their nature properly. We come to know not only about the three characters introduced in this act but also more about Algernon, Jack Worthing and Gwendolen. Though Jack is the hero of the play, it is Algernon who dominates this act and proves a tough match to Jack. Jack becomes a victim of both his own deception and the deception of his friend Algernon. His efforts to kill off his brother Ernest prove futile because of the deception of his friend Algernon who comes posing as Jack's wicked younger brother, Ernest. His efforts to get himself rechristened as Ernest is also balked by Algernon's own efforts to get himself rechristened as Ernest. Thus christening is treated as insignificant convenience to suit the exigencies of love which in itself is equally frivolous.

The play is a comedy of dialogue. By his brilliant manipulation of dialogue, Wilde provides a non-stop comic fare. The characters and the situations have all been made to subserve the dialogue whose chief aim is laughter. Humour, irony, wit, epigram, paradox all contribute to the rich comic effect of the play. Deception and tricks form the core of a comedy. In Wilde's play, these are employed and exploited to the full. As the play is a farcical comedy, the improbable and the absurd also find their way to enrich its comic content.

3.2.2.3 ACT III:

Gwendolen and Cecily are in the drawing-room at the Manor House, Woolton. They are looking out of the window eager to discover the relations of Jack and Algernon to their sudden departure. Though both want the two men to follow them, they agree to preserve a dignified silence if they do.

Jack and Algernon enter, whistling some dreadful popular tune from a British opera. In spite of their agreement, Cecily cannot restrain herself and asks Algernon why he pretended to be Jack's brother. He explains that he did so in order to meet her, and Cecily seems perfectly satisfied. Gwendolen in turn, asks Jack if he pretended to be Jack's brother, Ernest, in order to come to town to see her as often as possible. When he agrees that she is right, she is mollified. But complete forgiveness has not yet been achieved. The girls announced that the men's names are insuperable

obstacles to matrimonial bliss. But, when Algernon and Jack inform them that they intend to be christened that very afternoon, their differences are ironed out. They clasp each other warmly.

Merriman announces Lady Bracknell. As Gwendolen has not informed her of her proposed journey, she has been forced to bribe her maid to discover her whereabouts. Some comfort, she considers, can be derived from the fact that her unhappy father. Lady Bracknell believes that Gwendolen is attending a rather prolonged lecture under the University Extension Scheme. She absolutely annuls the engagement of Jack and Gwendolen, and turns her attention to Algernon. When she asks if he has been visiting Bunbury, Algernon tells her that Mr. BHunbury has died that same afternoon, having been found by his doctors as unable to live! Gaining confidence from the easy disposal of Bunbury, Algernon dares to tell his aunt that he is engaged to Cecily. Amazed by the sudden spate of engagements, probably caused by the country air, she asks Jack if Cecily is, by any chance, connected with any larger railway station. Jack is infuriated by her allusion to his origin, but he controls himself. He provides the name of Cecily's grandfather and mentions their three addresses. It impresses the wealth-conscious Lady Bracknell tremendously. He also gives the names of Cecily's solicitors. As further evidence of her respectable course through life, he offers to show Lady Bracknell the various certificates of baptism, whooping cough, etc. he smugly adds, that Cecily's fortune is £ 1,30000 in the Funds.

This crowning information, in itself being enough, makes further testimonials unnecessary for Lady Bracknell. Cecily's financial solidity makes her alter the view of the horrid young girl into possessor of solid qualities. In her mind the marriage of Cecily and Algernon now merely requires her consent. Indeed, she says, Cecily, whose hair can be improved by a "thoroughly experienced French maid", is a sweet child whose profile shows "distinct social possibilities". The marriage has her approval and she tells Cecily that she can in future call her "Aunt Augusta". But in doing this, she has over-looked Jack.

Jack is Cecily's guardian and he declines to give his consent, as Algernon's moral character and disloyalty make him quite unsuitable for his ward. Jack quotes how Algernon trespassed into his own private house under false pretences, how he consumed an entire pint bottle of wine which Jack had been specially reserving for himself, how he also consumed all the muffins, how he has alienated the affections of his ward, and how all this has been done even though Algernon knew that Jack

never had a brother, such moral considerations are too trifling for Lady Bracknell and she feels able to overlook Algernon's shortcomings. Jack's consent will soon be unnecessary with Cecily becoming a major, she says.

As Cecily is already eighteen and will soon be of age, the marriage can be postponed until a date when the guardian's consent will be unnecessary. Very coolly Jack informs Lady Bracknell that according to the terms of Cecily's grandfather's will, Cecily does not legally come of age till she is thirty-five. Even this news does not deter Lady Bracknell. The property will have accumulated, then and Cecily should be even more attractive. Algernon is prepared to wait till then but Cecily admits that an impatient streak in her character would never brook such a delay. And so Jack is requested to reconsider his decision. He states his terms. If his own marriage to Gwendolen is approved, he will willingly consent to the marriage of Cecily and Algernon. Lady Bracknell refuses to bargain and prepares to catch the next train to London. At this juncture, Dr. Chasuble enters to inform them that all is ready for christening of Jack and Algernon, when Lady Bracknell is let into secret of the double christening, she labels the idea as "grotesque and irreligious" and forbids Algernon to participate in such an excess. Jack tells the Canon that the christening is now no longer of "much practical value". This statement deeply grieves the Rector especially as it comes from the lips of a man of Mr. Worthing's standing. Disappointed at this unexpected turn, Dr. Chasuble intends to return to the vestry at once where Miss Prism has been patiently waiting for him for an hour and a half. On reference of the name of Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell becomes excited - "Miss Prism!" Was that the name? Is she a woman of "repellent aspect"? She is informed that Miss Prism has been Cecily's esteemed governess for the last three years. Lady Bracknell has Miss Prism summoned before him.

Miss Prism approaches rather hurriedly. When she sees Lady Bracknell, she looks around anxiously, as if seeking an opportunity to escape. "Prism, where is that baby?" bellows Lady Bracknell. The Canon starts back. Algernon and Jack pretend to shield Cecily and Gwendolen from the lurid details of a shocking scandal. Apparently, so the explanation goes, twenty-eight years earlier, Miss Prism had left Lady Bracknell's house with a baby in a perambulator. She had never returned and the perambulator had been found a few weeks later containing only the manuscript of a three volume novel. Yes, Miss Prism confesses, she had left the house that fateful morning with the baby, but, in error, she had deposited the novel in the perambulator

and the baby in a capacious hand-bag. She recalls that she left the handbag at Victoria Station.

Jack rushes excitedly from his room, and a few moments later noises are heard overhead. All present listen eagerly. Suddenly Jack returns with a handbag of black leather. Is this the hand-bag? Miss Prism carefully examines any define signs to prove that it is indeed hers. In a pathetic voice Jack announces to all present that he was the baby who had been placed in that hand-bag. He embraces Miss Prism calling her mother. At this Miss Prism recoils and coldly informs Jack that she is neither married nor a mother. Lady Bracknell breaks the news that Jack is the son of her poor sister Mrs. Moncrieff and is Algernon's brother.

The question that remains unsolved is what is Jack's real name? Calling Lady Bracknell "Aunt Augusta", Jack eagerly asks if he has ever been christened. She tells him that all luxuries that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on him. And he had been named after his father an Army General. Gloom extends when she cannot remember her brother-in-law's first name. But she is sure that he must have had one. The Army list is fetched – "Moncrieff, General, 1989, Ernest John". Jack's name is really Ernest. In great joy, Dr. Chasuble embraces Miss Prism, Algernon, Cecily and Jack Gwendolen. Yes, says Jack meditatively, he realizes "the vital Importance of Being Earnest".

Critical Comments:

This final Act has been well conceived. In the beginning of the Act, the two pairs of lovers make up their differences. But the possibility of their love blossoming into marriages still remains a question mark. Lady Bracknell stalls the marriage of Jack and Gwendolen on the question of Jack's uncertain origin. Jack stalls the marriage of Cecily and Algernon as a tit for tat. As the marriages of Jack and Algernon hag in the balance, Jack does not find any necessity for christening much to the disappointment of Canon Chasuble.

The Canon wants to go back to the vestry to meet Miss Prism who has been waiting for the past hour and a half there. The mention of Miss Prism sends a vibrant message down the memory lanes of Lady Bracknell. She summons Miss Prism before her. It is her enquiry of Miss Prism that solves the mystery of Jack's parentage. This clears the first obstacle of his marrying Gwendolen. On knowing from "Aunt Augusta" that his father Mr. Moncrieff was an Army General, Jack is

able to trace the Christian name of his father as Ernest from a rummaging of Army List. It is now found that Algernon is his younger brother and both of them are natural Ernests. This removes the most importance obstacle to marry the objects of their choice for both Algernon and Jack as Cecily and Gwendolen will marry none but an Ernest.

Thus the two love affairs of Jack and Gwendolen; and Algernon and Cecily are brought to a happy consummation in the third Act. This brings round the main plot and the sub-plot of the play in a satisfactory happy note. To this is added the happy conclusions of the love-affairs of Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble leading happy union.

The hand-bag mystery which has begun in the first Act is happily solved in this Act. In solving the mystery, Wilde has exploited comic potentiality to the full in making. Jack who is proceeding to embrace, Miss Prism, as his mother and his willingness to excuse her for begetting him even though unmarried, much to the consternation of Miss Prism. Lady Bracknell intervenes and claims Jack as the son of her sister Mrs. Moncrieff. She also tells him that Algy is his brother, ironically enough; Jack has been claiming a fictitious identity as Ernest, supposed to be very wicked. In the end he gains Algernon a blood-brother who is the very epitome of wickedness. Jack who has earlier denied in the earlier Act that he has never had any brother now exults. "I know I had a brother. I always said I had a brother". This provides a comic reversal. He tells Gwendolen, "It is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?"

The third Act successfully resolves all the various complications that have been built up in the earlier first two Acts. The unraveling of the mystery of the hand-bag episode provides a sudden turning point in the plot. Just as the cigarette-case episode provides a punch to the first Act, the solution of the mystery of the hand-bag episode provides a punch to the Third Act. It also adds a mock-seriousness to the play in addition to providing excellent comical situation. The triviality of the episode added to its improbability does not stand in the way of irresistible laughter it produces in the audience.

All the characters vie with each other in making humorous remarks of one kind or the other by means of the excellent dialogue they speak. Wilde carries the audience with him with masterly dialogue.

3.2.2.4 Check your progress:

- 1) The cigarette-case episode introduced in the _____
 - a) second act
 - b) first act
 - c) third act
 - d) fourth act
- 2) Algernon has another identity as _____
 - a) Bunbury
 - b) Ernest
 - c) Lane
 - d) John
- 3) _____ who gave Jack the name 'Worthing' as he had a first class ticket for Worthing at the time.
 - a) Algy
 - b) Lady Bracknell
 - c) Thomas Cardew
 - d) Cecily
- 4) The second act of *the Importance of Being Earnest* open on _____
 - a) June
 - b) July
 - c) August
 - d) September
- 5) Algernon takes the opportunity of telling Cecily that she is like a _____
 - a) pink rose
 - b) red rose
 - c) dark rose
 - d) yellow rose
- 6) Cecily considers political Economy as horrible as _____ or German.
 - a) Geography
 - b) History
 - c) Philosophy
 - d) Social
- 7) Miss Prism's full name is _____
 - a) Laetitia Prism
 - b) Olivia Prism
 - c) Jusy Prism
 - d) Mary Prism.

3.2.3 Section III:

3.2.3.1 Characters in the Play:

3.2.3.2 John (Jack) Worthing:

He is the hero (Protagonist) of the play. He is a stiff, stodgy individual. He is twenty-nine years old, smokes and drinks. He is a Liberal Unionist and is well off. He has revealed the secret of his fictitious identity as Ernest only to Algy. He has a bachelor apartment in the name of Ernest Worthing at B.4, The Albany, W. in London. He is very serious by disposition. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception.

He is a guardian of Cecily. Throughout the play, he acts as if he had toothache. He leads a double life. In the country he is the local Justice of Peace. But, in town, he has something that inspires absolute confidence with simplicity of character and wonderfully blue eyes.

Jack does not fight shy of telling of his mysterious origin on Lady Bracknell. When the latter subjects him to a systematic enquiry to verify his bonafides to be considered eligible for the hand of her daughter, Gwendolen, Jack does not want to drag on his dubious identity as Ernest for long. He decides to kill off his fictitious brother. This effort lands him into a ridiculous position because of the trickery of Algy. He proves himself to be very submissive to Lady Bracknell.

As a lover, Jack is very sincere and steadfast. But his love affair with Gwendolen does not run smooth.

Jack is a pleasure-seeker no doubt, but he is not one who will stoop to any level for seeking pleasure like Algernon who is the worst Bunburyist. Jack has two identities. His responsibility in the country is a mask to his frivolous and wicked life in the town.

3.2.3.3 Algernon Moncrieff:

He is an aristocratic young man. He lives in a luxurious flat in Half Moon Street, London. He has his room very luxuriously and artistically furnished. He is the Nephew of Lady Bracknell and the cousin of Gwendolen. He has a taste for music and he cares for sentiment rather than accuracy in it. Even his Aunt Augusta (Lady Bracknell) depends on him for her musical programme.

Algernon is a frivolous young man whose chief motive is pleasure. He is a high liver and a lavish entertainer. He is noted for his spacious arguments. He does not permit his friend Ernest Worthing to eat the cucumber sandwiches. He considers proposal to marrying a young woman not as a matter of pleasure but a matter of business.

Algy has double identity, in order to escape from his aunt's pestering and to seek a life of pleasure. He has no moral scruples. He is past master in deception. He is an Oxonian. He has fondness for over dressing. He is very practical. He does not allow his duties as a gentleman into interfere with his pleasure. That is why he does not want to leave Jack's Manor House. He pretends as the wicked younger brother Ernest in order to pay court to Cecily. In the end, it is proved that he is the true younger brother of Jack. He is predestined to be Jack's wicked brother and so pretends to be Ernest Worthing unconsciously.

3.2.3.4) Gwendolen Fairfax:

She is the only daughter of Lord and Lady Bracknell. She is the first cousin of Algy. She is a highly attractive young lady whose concern in the play is to marry Ernest Worthing (Jack). She is attracted towards Jack. She decided to marry Jack ever since she heard from her cousin.

She is very intelligent and highly practical. When Jack begins talking to her about the weather, she is quick enough to anticipate that he means something else. She is very frank and forthright in her views. When Jack tells her that he does not like his name Ernest and suggest the name Jack.

When Jack looks at her with loving eyes, she admires his "wonderfully blue eyes" and wishes that he always looks at her just like that, especially when there are other people present. Gwendolen is a lady of independent spirit and advantageous nature. In spite of her mother's dominating control over her, she decides to prosecute her love affair with Jack. That is why she very specifically gets Jack's country address noted down.

She has been born and bred up in the town has no idea about the country. She had no idea that there were any flowers in the country. The country always bores her to death. She has a feeling that her first impressions of people are never wrong. She likes Cecily and considers her name very sweet. She encounters with Cecily proves that she finds a tough match in Cecily.

In the opinion of Jack, 'Gwendolen is as right as a 'trivet'. To him, she is sensible, intellectual girl! The only girl, I ever cared for in my life. Algy calls her 'a brilliant clever, thoroughly experienced young lady'. According to her own mother, she is a girl with a simple unspoiled nature.

Gwendolen is light-hearted, spirited and witty by nature. Her remarks are highly humorous. She shows her proclivity for indulging in paradoxes. Her love affair with Jack, the hero after running through rough weather for a while ends in a happy note with her marriage to Jack, who is found to be a potential Ernest!

3.2.3.5 Cecily Cardew:

She is a pretty young lady of eighteen. She is the grand-daughter of Mr. Thomas Cardew. She is the ward of Jack Worthing. She lives with her guardian in the Manor House at Woolton in Hertfordshire. She is an heirless to a rich fortune bequeathed to her by her grand-father Thomas Cardew. She is entitled to substantial solid and liquid assets. It is this material affluence rather than her alluring charms that makes Lady Bracknell to consent to her marriage with her nephew Algernon. Cecily's intellectual refinements are looked after by her governess Miss Prism.

She finds her reading sessions with her governess, Miss Prism very uninteresting. She prefers to divert herself by watering the flower plants in the garden. But Miss Prism insists on her refinement in her German lessons. She feels the study of German 'bete noire'.

Cecily is sternly admonished by Miss Prism not to talk flippantly about her guardian. She becomes interested in the wicked younger brother of her guardian. She feels that between them, she and Miss Prism might be able to reform him. She is very fond of recording the odds and ends that she hears from others as well as some of her 'pet peeves' in her diary.

Cecily is shrewd enough to anticipate a let-off from her boring study session with Miss Prism, the moment she sights Dr. Chasuble coming towards the garden. She is asked to read political Economy during the absence of Miss Prism. But Cecily considers Political Economy as horrible as Geography or German.

Cecily is interested in meeting Algy, who comes Bunburying to the country under the identity of Jack's wicked younger brother Ernest Worthing. She reveals to Algy that she has begun loving him since three months and has even written Algy's

love letters knot on his behalf. She is adamant about the name 'Ernest' and does not like a poor substitute such as Algernon.

Cecily's encounter with Gwendolen reveals her girl, ready wit and her resourcefulness. Her love for Algy is sincerely nourished by her since long. She is not punctual herself, she knows, but she likes punctuality of Jack is established. She is able to marry Algernon with the consent of her guardian. As she has been dreaming to marry only as Ernest, she marries Algernon as Ernest.

Jack considers Cecily, 'a sweet, simple and innocent girl. Algy regards her as visible personification of absolute perfection. Aware of her limited intelligence, she confesses that she must marry a simple man.

Gwendolen wishes she were not quite so very alluring in appearance. Even Lady Bracknell admits, your dress is simple, your hair seems almost as nature, might have left is but there are distinct social possibilities in your profile.

3.2.3.6 Lady Bracknell:

She is a wife of Lord Bracknell who lives in 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, London. She is a typical example of the arrogant, class-conscious elderly aristocratic English lady of mid-Victorian society. She is the mother of Gwendolen Fairfax and aunt of Algernon Moncrieff. As her name 'Augusta' indicates she is a domineering, pompous lady who likes to hold everyone under her thumb. She exercises her control over her daughter.

Lady Bracknell is polite but superstitious. She is a good judge of men and matters. She is on the lookout for a prospective match for her only daughter, Gwendolen. She has a list of eligible young men which is the same as that of Duchess of Bolton. Jack does not find his name in Lady Bracknell's list. But she will enter his name after a satisfactory enquiry. She considers that it was utter carelessness on the part of Jack to have lost both parents. She is shocked to learn that he was found in a black leather hand-bag in Victoria Station.

When she comes to know of Algy's proposal to Cecily, she wants to know everything about Cecily. She considers Cecily to be very charming and a good match to her nephew Algy. She learns that Cecily cannot marry without her guardian Jack's consent until she becomes thirty-five.

Lady Bracknell is highly partial and she does not pay heed to the catalogue of Algy's misdeeds to Jack Worthing, his friend. She drives terror in the mind of Miss Prism.

Lady Bracknell is one of the important characters from the point of view of plot and the nature of the play. It is her objection to Jack's marriage to Gwendolen that provides the much need complication to the plot. Her objection to her daughter's marriage to Jack results in the counter objection of Cecily's marriage to Algernon. The play is a farcical comedy. The humorous remarks of Lady Bracknell are very memorable and they are a constant source of rich comedy. The creation of this memorable character is a feather to the cap of Oscar Wilde.

3.2.3.7 Miss Prism:

She is governess of Miss Cecily Cardew, the pretty young ward of her employer Mr. Jack. Her full name is Laetitia Prism. She is entrusted with the task of educating Miss Cecily. In earlier years she had been employed as a governess of Lady Bracknell's sister, Mrs. Moncrieff. She had been so engrossed in the three-volume novel she was writing, that she had in error placed the baby in her hand-bag and the manuscript in the perambulator. She had deposited the hand-bag in the cloak-room at Victoria station and coolly forgotten the whole thing. Miss Prism has caused the worst damage by her inexcusable absent-mindedness; it is highly surprising that she advises Cecily against keeping a diary. She defines factious thus: 'The good ended happily. The bad ended unhappily. That is what fiction means'. Her employer Jack considers her "an admirable governess". To him Miss Prism is esteemed governess and valued companion. She looks after Cecily with great care and control. She does not like the modern mania of reforming bad people overnight.

Miss Prism finds her heart throbbing in the presence of Dr. Chasuble. She succeeds in witting the hand of Dr. Chasuble. She is more truly Victorian than any other character. Lady Bracknell describes her as 'a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education. She is also pictured as the opposite by Dr. Chasuble, 'the most cultivated of ladies'.

3.2.3.8 Dr. Frederick Chasuble:

He is the Rector of Jack's country Parish. He holds a Doctorate in Divinity (D.D.) He is also attached to a cathedral as a member of the Bishop's Counsel, and is thus Canon Chasuble. These titles indicate his high rank in the (Primitive) Church.

He plays an unimportant part in the play. He is a regular visitor to the Worthing household because he is deeply impressed by the integrity of Mr. Worthing, who is not one 'whose sole aim is enjoyment, and also because he is more than interested in Miss Prism.

Dr. Chasuble is quite warm and consoling. He is harsh and unsympathetic. Though it is one of the regular duties of a Rector to perform christenings, it is highly funny that both Jack and Algernon should express doubts as to the ability of Dr. Chasuble to perform the christening ceremony properly.

Dr. Chasuble is a creature by the prescriptions of the primitive church to which he belongs. But he feels irresistibly attracted towards Miss Prism. The more he tries to suppress his true feelings, the more they get exposed. He calls Miss Prism "Egeria" by employing a classical allusion instead of Letitia which is her real name.

3.3 A Critical Appreciation of the Play:

The importance of Being Ernest was the most important work of Oscar Wilde. It was first performed in St. James's Theatre in London on 14th Feb. 1895. It is Wilde's funniest play and it is also the most poignant play. Originally the play was written in Four Acts. But at the request of the play's director Alexander, Wilde shortened the play by dropping the entire third act of his original version.

It is a comic masterpiece. The theme is entirely fantastic where weaknesses of Wilde become less obvious. The play has no purpose except to be gay. It is the funniest and most attractive play. It is a farce taking us into realm of absurdity in an attempt to recover lost innocence. Though laughter, it tries to purge us of sin and evil.

The play derives its comedy from the two girls, Gwendolyn and Cecily believing themselves to be engaged / to the same man 'Ernest' and the two young men Jack and Algernon trying to get themselves christened as 'Ernest' by Dr. Chasuble who is willing to oblige them both. The high point of comedy is reached when Jack comes in mourning dress and enters his country seat after killing his imaginary brother 'Ernest' only to find that Algernon is 'burn burying' there as his brother 'Ernest' and making love to his cousin Cecily. The question of Jack's parentage and the fact that he is a 'foundling' left in a hand-bag at Victoria station and the final revelation that he is the own brother of Algernon provide brilliant opportunities for

Wilde to unleash several moments of non-stop fun and comicality. With the establishment in the plot are solved and the young lovers are happily married. Lady Bracknell, the mother of Gwendolyn provides excellent punch to this brilliant comedy by her inimitable character and pungency for brilliant wit and ironical humour.

The Plot of *The Importance of Being Earnest* is slight and presents no difficulties. Wilde himself wrote of it. The real claim of the play, if it is to have a claim, must be in the dialogue. The plot is slight but I think adequate - yes, adequate for light-hearted entertainment. His own estimation of the play was that first act was ingenious, the second beautiful and the third abominably clever. Though few will find the second act beautiful and many will decline to share the view that any part of the play may be called ingenious, most will admit certain cleverness in its construction.

Characterization:

It also observes a degree of decorum in characterization by keeping well away from the stock types. Neither Jack nor Algy speaks with the ebullient raciness of the stage "Swell" or the slangy, drawl of the dim theatrical younger son. Wilde's characters, who speak like their creator in well-formed complete sentences, rarely use slang or vogue-words.

The young woman diverges from type in a similar way. Cecily is more knowing than the ingénues she is based on. Gwendolen is clever and independent minded. But her fashionable elegance distinguishes her from the common image of the modern, intellectual women as dowdy, straight-haired and faddish.

Dialogue:

The whole play sparkles with brilliant dialogue and wit with saying often wise and often entertaining.

Realism:

It is interesting to see how much realism can be found in this play. The scene is laid in Mayfair and on the country estate of an established gentleman. The plot is highly improbable and the characters are principally drawn from the upper classes, where love may or may not depend on such a triviality as the name of Ernest. The

characters of *The Importance of Being Ernest* revealed a concentration of eccentricity which was highly improbable even in the heyday of late Victorian Society.

Wilde was not particularly interested in realism. He found no beauty in actuality. In his own words, his comedies were trivial comedies for thinking people.

Trick of Expectation:

It has been pointed out by some critics that Wilde employs the trick of expectation in preference to surprise in this play. The audience likewise knows the truth about Algy and Bunbury and about Jack and Ernest. So they can pleasantly enjoy the confusion that arises among the other characters because of their ignorance of the deception.

Humour:

Wilde's humour 'transmutes' hackneyed incidents of plot into something new and individual. The brilliant craftsmanship of Wilde coupled with his irresistible paradoxical humour makes Walkley call him 'an artist in sheet nonsense'.

3.4 *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a Comedy of Manner:

The play depicts the aristocratic, convention ridden and class-conscious mid-Victorian society. This high comedy stresses the artificiality of personality and theme. All the characters of the play are highly eccentric and for them the normal values of our world stand reversed. To Algy a marriage proposal is a matter of business and not pleasure. He considers a wife flirting with her own husband as highly scandalous for it amounts to washing one's clean line in public.

Satire is also an integral part of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Its satire is airy and delicate. It is exquisitely encapsulated in wit. It is essentially intellectual. In it Wilde makes fun of the ridiculously exaggerated values of birth, rank, fashion, etc. Lady Bracknell, the dreadnought dowager would not condescend to give his only daughter Gwendolen to marry into a cloak-room and form an alliance with a parcel.

Contemporary standards of education come in for criticism in the hands of Lady Bracknell. Victorian sense of duty and code of morality are satirized in the personage of Miss Prism. Irresponsible newspaper critics are debunked through the remarks of Algernon. But Wilde does not aim his shaft of satire directly on the object.

Comedy of manners is also known as comedy of wit. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is an excellent comedy of wit. It deals with certain permanent values and attitudes of English social life.

1.5 *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a Farce:

The main characteristics of farce are the dependence in it of character and of dialogue upon mere situation. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a farce. The play is a comic masterpiece. It reveals in its own improbability and absurdity. It is consistently farcical in tone, characterization and plot. A baby mislaid in a hand bag at a London railway station, and the completely arbitrary desires of young ladies to marry men with the name Ernest; in fact, Wilde really invented a new type of play, and that type was the only quite original thing to be contributed to the English stage. In form, it is farce, but in spirit and in treatment it is comedy. Yet it is not farcical comedy. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a psychological farce, the farce of ideas.

The play consists of plenty of farcical situation. The discovery of Jack's double-identity is based on a trivial cigarette-case episode. Jack's effort to kill his imaginary brother 'Ernest' is highly farcical. Algy's eating all the cucumber sandwiches intended for his aunt is highly absurd and farcical. The quarrel between Cecily and Gwendolen in Act II is highly childish and absurd. The hand-bag episode in the Act III leads to a farcical situation.

It is true farce and as such it lays stress on the comic, or rather absurd, the almost incredible situation as detailed above. All the characters in the play are deliberately sacrificed to the farcical situations. The proposal of Jack and Gwendolen is highly farcical, irrespective of Lady Bracknell's presence or absence on the stage.

The Importance of Being Earnest is a true farce in which the characters and the plot are subordinated to the interests of farcical situations. Wilde says that this play was written by a butterfly for butterflies. In writing this play, his chief aim was to provide unalloyed entertainment. So, he exploits all the characteristics of farce to provide a pure comedy for his audience.

1.6 Key Terms

Repertory : history

Ernest / Ernest	:	In title the spelling is Earnest – means Serious, solemn. Ernest – the name of the hero and his Friend. (Jack uses this wrong spelling).
Worthing	:	Mr. Thomas Cardew gave Jack the name Worthing because there was a first-class ticket of Worthing station in his pocket. When he found him in a hand-bag in the cloak-room of Victoria Station.
Trivial	:	ordinary / ignorable
Reprobate	:	person of very immoral character
Country	:	countryside
Town	:	City of London
Frivolous	:	not serious in content or attitude or behavior.

3.7 Answer to check your progress

3.2.1.8

- 1) Comedy of manners
- 2) Three
- 3) Twenty-Five
- 4) Serious
- 5) Bunbury
- 6) Victoria
- 7) Sir Thomas Cardew
- 8) Laticia
- 9) Twenty-nine
- 10) Moncrieff
- 11) Rev. Canon Dr. Chasuble
- 12) 1894
- 13) Miss Prism
- 14) Sixteen
- 15) To christen then as Ernest
- 16) The cloak-room of Victoria Station

- 17) Ernest Worthing
- 18) Hertfordshire
- 19) Lane
- 20) Merriman
- 21) Lady Bracknell
- 22) Gwendolen
- 23) £ 1,30000
- 24) A three volume manuscript of a novel
- 25) Ernest Worthing.

3.2.2.4 Answer to check your progress

1. first act
2. Bunbury
3. Thomas Cardew
4. July
5. pink rose
6. Geography
7. Laetitia Prism

3.8 Exercises:

A) Long answer type questions: -

- 1) consider *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a comedy of manners.
- 2) How does Oscar Wilde handled the theme of love in *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- 3) Examine *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a farce.
- 4) Write a note on Oscar Wilde's humour in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 5) Consider *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a comedy of dialogue.
- 6) Attempt a critical appraisal of the plot construction of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 7) Attempt a character – Sketch of Jack Worthing.
- 8) Attempt a character – Sketch of Algernon Moncrieff

- 9) Attempt a character – Sketch of Gwendolen Fairfax.
- 10) Attempt a character – Sketch of Cecily Cardew.
- 11) Consider *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a social satire.

B) Short answer type question: -

- 1) The Rev. Canon Dr. Chasuble
- 2) Miss Prism
- 3) Title of the Play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 4) A critical appreciation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 5) An essay on the language and style in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- 6) Examine the dramatic technique of Oscar Wilde as evidenced in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

3.9 References for further study:

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Module IV

Hamlet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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4.1 Objectives

- To understand William Shakespeare’s vision of life and how he reveals the eternal conflicts between reality and illusion, faith and despair, the mind and body.
- To understand the concept of tragedy with special reference to *Hamlet*.
- To understand the various themes in the play to improve creative and imaginative faculties through the study of *Hamlet*.

4.2 Introduction

Hamlet is William Shakespeare’s most famous play, a master piece. *Hamlet* has been the subject of continuous controversy through the ages. *Hamlet* shows power and glory of Shakespeare’s tragic vision. The play was entered on the Stationer’s Register on 26th July, 1602. The play is of intense emotional and physical violence. Hamlet, the son of late king of Denmark, is in melancholy mood because he has lost his father and his mother has married to his uncle within two months of his father’s death. He is visited by the ghost of his father who tells him that he is murdered by his own brother Claudius. Now Hamlet thinks that it is his duty to take revenge. He finds him unsuitable to take revenge. He decides to wear a grab of madness so that he will be ignored and he can plan plot to take revenge. His journey of revenge goes with the time and in the end he takes revenge at the cost of his own life.

4.3 Biographical information of William Shakespeare

After Shakespeare’s death Ben Jonson, a contemporary of William Shakespeare, said, “He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature: he had an excellent fancy, brave notions, and gentle expressions.” He further said, “I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any.” These sentiments are appropriate for, like Jonson, many in the world have long loved and honoured

Shakespeare, who is poet-dramatist of all seasons and of all ages. In fact, every day Shakespeare is discussed about his art on the planet and a day never ends without it.

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) was born in a small village at Stratford-on-Avon and exact date of his birth is not known. But he was baptized on 26th April, 1564 at the parish at Stratford-on-Avon on 23rd April is thought as appropriate date of his birth as it is St. George's day which is the day of the patron Saint of England. He married shortly after 27th November, 1582 by special license from the Bishop of Worcester to Anne Whateley, eight years older to Shakespeare, of Temple Grafton. But Anne Whateley's name appeared as Anne Hathway of Stratford in the bond of sureties. Susanna, daughter of Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford church on 26th May, 1583. Hamnet, a son and Judith, daughter were born as twins and they were baptized on 2nd February, 1585. In 1593 Shakespeare's name was appeared as author of *Venus and Adonis* and after this his name is found in various actors' lists. In 1599 he was a shareholder in the Globe Theatre and he bought freehold land in Stafford and after that his name appeared in different documents related to land, titles and legal disputes. On 25th March, 1616 he signed his will and he died on 23rd April, 1616.

There is lack of information about different famous persons from Elizabethan period because nobody has written about them or famous persons also have not written about themselves. Both writing and acting were thought as below dignity of gentlemen. So we have very little authentic information about Shakespeare. We do not find review of his plays or what Shakespeare thought about his plays. Even Shakespeare did not write notes about his plays.

About Shakespeare parents there is very little information. His father John, a notable figure in the town, was a trader and owner of property with civic office in Stratford. Mary Arden, mother of Shakespeare, was from wealthy and gentlefolk family. Shakespeare had a grammar school education at his native place where he must have learned major Latin classics and training in the arts of speech and eloquence. With decline in business of father Shakespeare was withdrawn from his school. He was in his native until he was eighteen years old where he had connections with land, nature, and people of different classes which must have given strength to his learning of life which has reflected in his literature

Shakespeare was drawn to London to create fortune for him or circumstances must have forced him to leave his Stratford Avon. It is also said that he went to London with a band of strolling players who visited Stratford in 1585. Here in London he must have tried his hand both in acting and writing. By 1592 Shakespeare was man of some reputation because Robert Greene, contemporary the playwright, makes reference to Shakespeare in his writing. Theaters were built after 1676 and plays were performed at all over the provinces. There was greater demand for plays and Shakespeare was ready to write plays with his experience of life and little education. He had formal education and experience of life in a small community and also metropolis in 16th century England. In 1593 Shakespeare was a member of Lord Chamberlain's company. He stayed with company writing plays and acting in the plays. His career as playwright and actor and share holder in two theatres brought him considerable financial reward that he brought property at his native place and bought a family coat, status of gentleman, for his father. In 1611 Shakespeare retired to his native place as a fairly wealthy man.

Shakespeare probably began his career as dramatist by collaborating with others for his company. He wrote thirty-seven plays and two non-dramatic work *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* and one hundred and fifty-four sonnets.

4.4 Check your progress

A) Complete the following sentences choosing the correct alternative:

- 1) William Shakespeare was born in.....
a) 1570 b) 1564 c) 1603 d) 1616
- 2) To create fortune for himself Shakespeare came to London from
a) Paris b) Warwickshire c) Stratford on Avon d) Norway
- 3) By Shakespeare was man of some reputation.
a) 1603 b) 1592 c) 1597 d) 1600
- 4) Shakespeare's name was appeared as author of
a) A Man and woman b) *Venus and Adonis*
c) Moon and Stella d) Globe
- 5) In 1593 Shakespeare was a of Lord Chamberlain's company.

- a) Manager b) member c) owner d) partner

B) Answer the following questions in one word or phrase.

- 1) For whom Shakespeare bought a family coat?
- 2) How many non dramatic works Shakespeare wrote?
- 3) When did Shakespeare retire from the theater?
- 4) What was the name of Shakespeare's mother?
- 5) When did Shakespeare sign his will?

4.5 Elizabethan Times (1560-1630):

Elizabethan time is named after the Queen Elizabeth I. It is always useful to know the times in which the writer writes. Shakespeare belongs to Elizabethan times. (1560-1630). Much in Shakespeare belongs to the age in which he lived and it is essential to keep in mind certain things about his time. England was a small kingdom about four to five million people. London was the largest capital and famous trade centre. There were numerous villages, rural character, and agriculture and wool trades were main businesses. There was no industry. There were old castles of powerful nobles with their private army but in the time of Shakespeare instead of castle now peaceful type of buildings were built. Shakespeare knew all its varied life of plants, trees, animals, birds and people. By 1564 England had peaceful time for almost seven decades and also security from civil war. Religious and economic changes made by Henry VIII were accepted by majority of the people. Supreme Head of the Church was not the Pope but English King. Queen Elizabeth was supreme authority in all ecclesiastical matters. The wealth from new world was brought to England.

Queen Elizabeth with her own vision and plan kept England under her control. But attempts to kill Queen Elizabeth were repeatedly made. There was a kind between Catholic and Protestants factions. Church was disposed much of its property and land was made available to common man. England was becoming a great trading country. The very picture of the physical world had changed. Now the world was round for the people. The world of Shakespeare was that of Christian faith. The history of the man was to found in the Bible. The fall of man through original sin,

Christ's life on the earth, second coming and eternal life in heaven were parts Elizabethan mind. The Bible was translated for the common man in English.

Elizabethan period is remarkable in the production of literature. The period witnessed a variety of literatures. Among the literary forms drama was the most popular. In fact, the period is called as the golden period of English drama. Poetry was great both in quality and quantity. In Elizabethan period, Greek literature was brought to England and same was translated in English. Rich soil of England was fertilized by deep layers of translation. Influence of Greek literature was very much encouraging for the rise and growth of Literature. Importance of the knowledge was felt and same was encouraged. Sonneteers made England a nest of singing birds while University Wits paved the way for the development of proper drama and Shakespeare, the greatest of all, has dominated the dramatic scene not just for his age but for all the ages to come.

4.6 The Elizabethan Theater:

Watching play at theater was very popular in Elizabethan time for it was universal entertainment at that time. There were different types of people in the audience like gamester, captain, knights, knight's men, or servant, women of doubtful reputation, shop's foreman, brave sparks etc. All these people would pay and see the play to decide life and death of plays. There were not more than five public theaters in Shakespeare's time and all these theatres were in London.

These theaters were built according to design of the in-yards of the period which were wonderfully convenient for the presentation of the plays. The theatre was circular or octagonal in shape. The main part was pit which was open to the sky in which poor people would stand. There were walls encircling pit where three balconies with seats. The stage was large without any scenery with meagre properties. The scenery was created the characters through their words. The plays were performed in broad day light. (*Hamlet* opens at night and cold midwinter night and the time is referred by Francisco and Bernardo).

The play would start and there was no interval. The lack of intervals or frequent changes of scenes were immaterial because stage was without any scenery. There were no separate scenes in the play. Entrances and exits were part of the play. It was necessary to carry dead bodies off the stage. Under the stage was orchestra and it was important feature of Elizabethan theatre. At the back of the stage there was a recess

which was curtain and this could be shut off when desired. Above the recess, there was a balcony which could be used as an upper room, walls or castle and this could be hid. The stools were also provided to sit on the stage at extra cost to the people, who wanted attention of the common people. Women were not allowed by law to take act in the play. So the roles of women were played by the young boys in their broken voice. The law banning women to act was actually the result of allowing some women to take part to bring variety in the play disguised as page boy. On the day of performance, a flag was flown from the turret and trumpet was sounded at the start of the play. It was quite challenging for Shakespeare to write for Elizabethan theater.

4.7 Sources of the Play

The text of *Hamlet* creates problems regarding its date and sources. The play was on record on the stationer's Registrar on July 1602 but the play may have been performed as early as 1598 and 1602 as the latest. The scholars find it difficult to establish accurate text of the play. Shakespeare borrowed material from different sources and convert that material into wonderful creations of art with his own stamp of greatness. Saga of Hamlet was written by Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish writer in 1208 whose *Historica Danica* was in Latin. It was printed in Paris in 1514. The third and fourth books of his work tell the story of Amleth of Hamlet in the Saga of Danish kings. Shakespeare was deeply indebted to Saxo. It is thought that Shakespeare referred to *Histoires of Belleforest* which is written by the French writer. Some other sources are also suggested by the scholars. Shakespeare must have been influenced by his contemporary writers also. But Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is different from the sources because he has invented different characters and events in the play.

4.8 Setting of the play:

Setting in the context of drama is background of the story in terms of time, culture and climate etc. Apart from history plays of Shakespeare, all his plays are set in some places at abroad. It helped Shakespeare to colour and romanticize his plays. The story of the plays may be from Denmark, Italy or Scotland and of any age but the local colour of the plays is naturally of Elizabethan England.

In Elizabethan time life and spirit of plays mattered more than anything else so accuracy of the place, costume, or topical references was not important. *Hamlet* was

very popular play of Shakespeare because the play for the audience was mirror of nature. People saw in the drama a reflection of their own life and experience. Play's appeal was not in wise analytical or educational appeal but human. In that people were uneducated, untraveled and they more interested in the stories rather accuracies of the place or setting. There was no scenery or costume of the period. One can find some references about the contemporary plays in Elizabethan times in *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* mentions about the nature of rehearsal of the plays. There are many allusions to other features of English life in Elizabethan times. Role of female characters were played by young boys and on many occasions older actors had to go on tour in the provinces. But Shakespeare has taken lot care and attention to accurate local colour. One can see Danish flavor in the names of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz and costume also. *Hamlet* takes place in Elsinore, town on the eastern coast of Denmark. It was important military location.

4.9 Characters in the play:

Hamlet: The Prince of Denmark, thirty years old, the protagonist. He is son of Queen Gertrude and the late King, and nephew of Claudius, present King

Claudius: The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and antagonist of the play.

Gertrude: Mother of Hamlet and wife of Claudius

Polonius: The Lord Chamberlain, in the court of Claudius and father of Laertes and Ophelia.

Horatio: Loyal friend of Hamlet

Ophelia: Sweet and innocent young girl

Laertes: son of Polonius's and Ophelia's brother,

Fortinbras: Prince of Norway

The Ghost: The specter of Hamlet's recently deceased father.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: Two courtiers and former friends of Hamlet

Osric : The foolish courtier

Voltimand and Cornelius: Courtiers send to Norway by Claudius

Marcellus and Bernardo: The officers who first see the ghost

Francisco: A soldier and guardsman

Reynaldo: Polonius' servant

4 .10 Plot of *Hamlet*

A pair of watchman discovers a ghost walking on the wall of Elsinore Castle in Denmark on dark and winter night. Then Horatio, scholar, sees the ghost which resembles the recently died King Hamlet. Claudius, brother of Hamlet, has inherited the throne and married the king's widow, Queen Gertrude. Prince Hamlet is brought by Horatio and the watchmen to see the Ghost. The Ghost informs that it is the spirit of Hamlet's father and he was murdered by Claudius. The Ghost orders Hamlet to murder Claudius to revenge because Claudius has taken up his throne and married to his mother and the Ghost disappears.

Hamlet decides to take revenge but he is thoughtful by nature and he delays his plan to murder his uncle. He enters into deep melancholy and he almost becomes mad. Now Claudius and Gertrude are worried about prince's erratic behaviour. They try to find out the reason of his strange behaviour. They sent two close friends of Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to watch him closely. Polonius suggests that Hamlet is mad because he is in love with his daughter, Ophelia. Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet when he is in conversation with Ophelia. Hamlet appears mad but he is not in love with Ophelia.

A group of traveling actors comes to Elsinore. Hamlet thinks of testing his uncle's guilt. He asks the players to perform the sequence which is very much similar to that of his uncle's guilt. He would watch the reaction of his uncle when moment of murder occurs because uncle would surely react to the event. At the moment of the murder, in the sequence, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio think that Claudius is guilty. Now Hamlet wants to kill his uncle so he goes to kill his uncle but he finds that uncle is praying. He thinks that if he kills him his soul would go to heaven. Hamlet thinks that it would be inadequate revenge so he decides to wait. Claudius is very scared because he thinks that mad Hamlet would kill him. Out fear, for his safety, he orders that Hamlet should be sent to England immediately.

Hamlet goes to confront his mother. In the chamber of her mother, he hears a noise behind tapestry. He thinks that it his uncle's noise so he stabs him through the fabric with his sword. But it was Polonius. Hamlet is dispatched with Rosencrantz

and Guildenstern to England for the crime of killing Polonius. But actually the king has different plan. He wants that the king of England to kill Hamlet and for this he has given sealed orders with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for the king of England.

After the death of her father Ophelia is mad with grief and she drowns in the river. Her brother, Laertes, comes back from France to Denmark as a furious man. Claudius tells Laertes that Hamlet alone is responsible for his father and sister's death. The king and Horatio receive letters informing them that the prince has returned to Denmark because the ship was attacked by the pirates. Now Claudius plans to kill Hamlet with the help of Laertes who is convinced that Hamlet is responsible for the deaths of his father and sister. Laertes will fence Hamlet in innocent sport but Claudius will poison Laertes' blade and if he draws blood Hamlet will die. There is one more plan of the king to kill Hamlet. The king would poison a goblet and Hamlet would die after drinking it.

Hamlet comes back to Elsinore and at the same time funeral ceremony of Ophelia is being carried. Hamlet who is in grief attacks Laertes and says that he always loved Ophelia. Hamlet tells Horatio that one must be prepared to die because death can come at any time. Osric, a stupid courtier, comes with order of Claudius to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes. The first round of the sword-fighting is won by Hamlet and the king offers goblet to Hamlet but Hamlet refuses to have it. But Gertrude takes drink and she immediately dies due to poison in it. Laertes is successful in wounding Hamlet. But Hamlet does not die. Laertes is wounded by his own sword. He dies due to poison but before dying he tells Hamlet that the king is responsible for the death of the queen. Hamlet stabs Claudius with poisoned sword and forces him to drink the rest of the poisoned wine. Now both Claudius and Hamlet die and Hamlet is successful in taking his revenge. At this moment Fortinbras, a Norwegian prince who is leading army to Denmark arrives with ambassadors from England who informs that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is shocked to see the most pathetic sight of the dead bodies of entire royal family on the floor. He takes the power of the kingdom. . Horatio as per the request of Hamlet tells Hamlet's tragic story and then Fortinbras orders that Hamlet should be given a hero's funeral.

4.11 Act wise summary:

Act I

In the act wise-summary we will be able to understand scenes and what happens in the scenes. Only first act of the play is explained here with help of each scene and later on a summary of the first act and other acts is given.

First scene: A ghost is seen by Marcellus and Bernardo on the castle battlements for the last two nights. Horatio arrives to instigate the matter and Marcellus informs the guard that it is nothing but fancy. But suddenly apparition appears and it is very much like old Hamlet. The ghost of the old king is dressed in his armour. Horatio explains how the ambitious Fortinbras was killed when he tried to win Denmark by the old king, Hamlet..

Scene Two: In the scene Claudius, the king addresses the court and informs about the sad death of his brother, Hamlet. He also informs that now he is married to his brother's wife, Gertrude, without bothering about his elder brother's sad demise. Then he informs the court about the political problems referring to Fortinbras, Prince of Norway. He gives a permission to Laertes to return to France for his studies after coronation. He also urges Hamlet to stop grieving about his father's death. Hamlet is upset with his mother's marriage to the king. Horatio, good friend of Hamlet, informs him that he has seen the ghost of his father.

Scene three: Laertes warns his sister not respond to Hamlet's wooing seriously before he goes back to France. Polonius gives some fatherly advice to his son regarding his studies.

Scene four: At night Hamlet meets Horatio to try and see his father's ghost. Hamlet sees the ghost of his father and the ghost asks him to follow.

Scene five: The ghost tells Hamlet that he was murdered by his brother, Claudius. He tells Hamlet that Claudius poured poison in his ear while he was asleep and then seduced Gertrude. The ghost says to Hamlet to, 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder'. The ghost disappears. Hamlet tells Horatio and Marcellus about the ghost and asks them not tell anyone about this. The ghost reappears and asks them not to tell anyone about it. Horatio and Marcellus agree to the ghost immediately.

Summary of the First Act

The play opens at midnight at the Castle of Elsinore in Denmark. Francisco is at the sentry-post and he is waiting to be relieved. Bernardo arrives to relieve Francisco. Horatio and Marcellus also come to share the duty. Horatio is close friend of Hamlet and he is on special to watch if there is anything unusual. He is told that the ghost of Hamlet's father was seen yesterday. Horatio is skeptical and he wants to confirm it.

Marcellus is on his duty at dreaded night and he sees the ghost. The ghost was dressed in armour and it was like Hamlet, the dead king of Denmark. Marcellus suggests that Horatio being scholar should talk to the ghost. Horatio asks the ghost, "what art thou?" But the ghost walks away as if it was offended. Marcellus asks Horatio about the strictness about watch and he replied that it is an attempt to challenge Fortinbras who is the young prince of Norway whose father was killed by the late king Hamlet. Fortinbras has raised his army to take revenge and also to get the land that is lost to Denmark. Bernardo thinks that the ghost may want to say something in connection with this. But Horatio is not sure but he refers to supernatural things that have happened in the past before the murder of Julius Caesar.

The ghost comes back again. Horatio asks the ghost about what he wants and what would make him pleased and also asks about any danger to the state that it knows or any treasure that he may have buried when he was alive. But the ghost does not answer and goes away. Then Horatio thinks that the matter about ghost should be reported to Hamlet.

The new king, Claudius and his members of the court are present in the Stateroom of the castle. Claudius informs his courtiers about his marriage and why he has to marry so hastily with Queen Gertrude. He further informs that Fortinbras, the prince of Norway is creating problem because he thinks that after the death of king Hamlet Denmark is disorganized and very weak. He is wants his land and territory back occupied by king Hamlet. Claudius has already informed this matter to the uncle of Fortinbras. It is necessary to check the activities of Fortinbras and for this Cornelius and Voltimand are sent to the king of Norway. The next point is about a request from Leartes, the son of Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, who wants royal

permission to return to Paris. The permission is granted and Polonius also has no objection against his son.

Then next issue is about a request of Hamlet, nephew of the king, to return to the University of Wittenberg. Then Claudius advises Hamlet that he should stop mourning and should not remain in melancholy mood. But Hamlet says that his sorrow is too deep and he cannot express it. Mother of Hamlet also asks him not to mourn and think about father who is one with dust. Hamlet says that death is inevitable and it common fate of everyone. The mother reacts and says if it is fate then why he seems to mourn. At this point Hamlet reacts very sharply and says that he is not actor and his mourn is true. To this Claudius says mourning for dear one's death is natural but it should have some limit and if man expresses too much grief then it is challenge to God's holy plan. He further asks Hamlet to look at him as his father and he should give up idea of going to Wittenberg University. Queen also expresses same feelings and asks Hamlet to stay on. Claudius celebrates the occasion by drinking. When Hamlet is alone he expresses his feelings in a soliloquy and says he is sick of life. His father was superior to his uncle and his mother's marriage is most terrible shock. He cannot think that his mother can again marry and his mother has married within two months after the death of her husband who was so loving and caring. He is disappointed with his mother and thinks that he cannot trust anybody in the world. Horatio comes there to whom Hamlet asks about what he is doing in Elsinore. Horatio informs him that he comes to attend his father's funeral but Hamlet says that he has come to attend his mother's marriage. Horatio informs Hamlet that a ghost has appeared thrice and seen by sentries and it looks very much like his father. Hamlet asks the guards not tell anybody about the ghost.

Laertes says farewell to his sister Ophelia before he starts for Paris. He warns her that she should not trust Hamlet who may have loved her but he will never marry her for the reasons of social status. Ophelia promises him that she will follow his advice and she also asks him to make sure he should also behave properly and avoid moral mistakes. Polonius comes there and gives a long speech on the copy-maxims. Laertes once again reminds Ophelia about the advice before he leaves. Polonius asks about the dialogue between brother and sister. Ophelia informs all that has passed between her and Hamlet. When she informs that Hamlet has given token of love he warns her that Hamlet does not have an honourable intention and she should avoid him and protect herself. Ophelia assures her father about the same.

Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus are present at the sentry point at midnight. A sound is heard from the castle and Horatio asks about the sound. Hamlet answers that the king and his courtiers are drinking and trumpets are blown as mark of their joy. The ghost arrives but Hamlet does not know whether the ghost has good intension or bad. But he addresses him as his father. The ghost asks him to follow. Horatio and Marcellus don't want Hamlet to follow the ghost because they fear that it can hurt him or make him mad. But Hamlet cries out and follows the ghost.

The ghost turns and tells him that he is the spirit of his father. He has come to earth to urge him to take revenge of his death. To satisfy Hamlet's curiosity the ghost informs him that Claudius is murderer. To this Hamlet again says that he has doubt about it but the ghost says that if he has love and affection for his father then he must take revenge. About Hamlet's mother the ghost says that heaven will punish her. Then ghost disappears. Hamlet now appeals to heaven to help him in this mission. For him it was now divine mission and he would follow father's command. His friends are waiting for Hamlet to come back. They fear that Hamlet's mind may have distraught. Hamlet takes them into his confidence and asks them to keep it secret. Then he informs that he cannot challenge the honesty of the ghost but he would not share what the ghost has said to him. Hamlet tells them that there is something supernatural and we should believe in it. Hamlet again asks them not tell anybody about the ghost and his meeting with ghost. Now Hamlet should feign madness so that he is not misinterpreted.

Act II

Polonius sends Reynaldo who is servant of him to Paris with money and letters for his son. He asks his servant to keep an eye on him and tells his Danish friends that he is gambler and also after whores. After listening to this his friends may accept it or reject it. This would give Polonius an idea about his son's behavior in Paris. Ophelia tells her father that she seen Hamlet in very distraught condition. She was very moved when she saw him. He sighed deeply and left. Polonius is very fond jumping to conclusion. It is sheer madness on account of frustration in love. Ophelia also informs that as per Hamlet's wish she has returned all his love- letters and also denied any access to her. Polonius decides to inform this matter to the king.

Claudius and Gertrud call Hamlet's boyhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and ask them to watch and investigate Hamlet's mad behaviuor. After

listening to Polonius the king thinks that there is deeper reason behind Hamlet's behavior. Thus, Hamlet's friends start working like spy. But Hamlet's mother does not know about the king's suspicion. Unaware about king's mind the queen appreciates the king's effort and suggests to reward Rosencrantz and Guildenstern if they help her son. Polonius informs that ambassadors from Norway have come back. He also wants to tell more about Hamlet's madness. But the queen thinks it is only his father's death and her hasty marriage.

The ambassadors inform the king that the king of Norway has watched the activities of his nephew, Fortinbras and he has prevented him from attacking Denmark. The king of Norway also asks for permission to Fortinbras to pass through Denmark with his troops to Poland. Claudius now seeks more information about Hamlet but he only speaks in rhetorical language. The impatient Queen asks him to speak about matter. Polonius shows the love-letters written to Ophelia by Hamlet and he reads the letters loudly. Now the king is convinced that love is cause of Hamlet's madness but the king wants some more proof. Polonius suggests that the king and he can listen to conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia when they are together from behind the curtain. Hamlet enters and Polonius suggests the king and the queen to leave. He talks with Hamlet. There is exchange of words between them. After dialogue with Hamlet, Polonius thinks that there is method in madness of Hamlet.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are welcomed by Hamlet. Hamlet asks them why they have come to Denmark which is more like prison. But they reply that it not prison. Then Hamlet replies that it is our thinking that makes a thing as good or bad. Soon after some scrutiny Hamlet tell the truth that both of them have come not as friends but as spy. After listening to Hamlet both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have no answer. They inform him about the arrival of company of actors. Hamlet welcomes the actors who have come with Polonius. Hamlet makes to recite some speeches and then he asks them to present the play *Murder of Gonzago* and he will add some lines to it and it will be performed in the presence of the king.

When Hamlet is alone he starts his soliloquy. He says that he is making delay to take revenge of his father's death. He thinks himself as coward. He wants confirmation about his father's death. He will watch the reaction of the king when he will be watching something similar to his father's death. Both the king and the queen want to know the reason of Hamlet's madness. He enquires with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about the same. Hamlet has withheld the truth in his crafty madness.

Polonius informs that Hamlet has invited the king and the queen to watch the performance on that night.

Act III

The king is happy to learn about Hamlet's new interest. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave the place. The king and Polonius decide to spy on the meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia to confirm the cause of Hamlet's madness. The queen thinks that it is nothing but love for Ophelia is the reason of madness. She thinks that this madness is a temporary stage and Hamlet will marry Ophelia. Polonius asks Ophelia to read a holy book alone. It is customary to read religious book when person is alone. Hamlet arrives and both Claudius and Polonius hide themselves behind the curtain. Hamlet begins his soliloquy, 'to be or not to be, that is the question'. He says that life is a long torture and death is great relief. But suicide is a permanent damnation. He looks at Ophelia. As per the advice of her father Ophelia is returning all his gifts and letters. It is a great shock and blow to Hamlet. Hamlet says he has not given anything to her. She thinks Hamlet no more loves her. Hamlet asks her if she is fair and honest. Ophelia says it certainly appeared like that. But Hamlet says he did not love her. Ophelia says then she is deceived. Hamlet gives a long speech and asks her to join brothel. She is now a whore. When Hamlet asks about her father she informs that he is at home. But Hamlet does not believe in it and he thinks that Ophelia is hypocrite. While leaving her, he again criticizes her and calls her as double-faced. Hamlet leaves the place but Ophelia is crushed. She admires Hamlet as ideal scholar, soldier and courtier but now he is completely distraught. She calls herself as most unfortunate woman who was once very happy.

Polonius and Claudius come out of their hiding. Polonius once again says that the reason of Hamlet's madness is failure in love. But Claudius has still had doubts. He thinks that something is in the mind of Hamlet which will lead to very serious consequences. He decides to send Hamlet to England so that place and climate can be changed for him for his good. Unwillingly Polonius agrees with the king but he suggests that after the play a meeting between the queen and Hamlet should be arranged in which the queen will ask Hamlet to explain his malady. Polonius will hide himself when the meeting goes between the queen and Hamlet. If this plan fails, then Hamlet can be sent to England.

Now Hamlet is in the form of director. He tells the actors that they should be natural and not artificial while acting, gesture or postures. The display of the emotion must not too theatrical. But acting should not be tame and lifeless. Acting should like mirror up to nature. Hamlet is informed that the king and the queen have arrived for the performance. Hamlet seeks help from Horatio. Horatio is trusted friend of Hamlet who knows the circumstances under which his father died. . He asks Horatio to keep close eye upon Claudius when the play is performed. After the performance they will talk to each other. The king and queen and all other arrive for the performance. The queen asks Hamlet to sit by her but Hamlet says he would prefer to sit by Ophelia. Polonius is pleased to see this as confirmation of his love theory and he brings it to the notice of the king. Ophelia is also joyous to find Hamlet at her feet and says she cannot help laughing. Hamlet replies that his mother lost her husband two hours back and she is very happy now but Ophelia corrects him and it is months. Hamlet replies two months have passed but he cannot forget it completely.

The play begins which presents the murder of loving king and the infidelity of the queen. The king says he going to die and hopes that his wife to find another good husband. But wife too shocked at this idea and she swears that she will never marry again. Hamlet asks his mother's opinion about the play and mother replies the lady is protesting too much. Claudius asks Hamlet is there anything that is offensive. Hamlet informs the play is called as Mouse-trap and it will give no offence to persons with clear conscience. The play is continued as per Hamlet's plan. When poison is being pour into the king's ear Claudius is seen very much afraid and hysterical. Gertrude shouts for more light and she follows the king. Now Hamlet and Horatio are happy because their doubt is now confirmed. Hamlet is very jubilant and he wants some more music but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come with news that the king is disturbed. Hamlet is asked to meet his agitated mother. Rosencrantz asks for reason of Hamlet's mental status. Hamlet says he lacks advancement but Rosencrantz consoles him by saying that he will become the king. Hamlet asks Guildenstern to play the recorder but he replies that he cannot play it. Hamlet remarks Guildenstern does not know even the stops of an inanimate instrument and he says that he knows stops of him and pluck out the heart of his mystery

Now Hamlet is in melancholy mood after the performance. He is ready to drink hot blood. The king is disturbed. Hamlet has created problem for him. He calls Guildenstern and Guildenstern and ask them go with Hamlet to England. Polonius

brings the news that Hamlet is meting his mother and it is decided that that Polonius will listen to their dialogue from behind curtain. Claudius feels the pricks of his sin. He cannot pray to God. He finds himself in miserable condition. Hamlet reaches to mother's room and he finds that Claudius is praying and he is unguarded. It is good chance to kill Claudius. He thinks seriously about killing his uncle. His father was killed Claudius when he was not prepared to die and that why his father in the form of ghost. Then he decides not to kill him because he is not prepared for his death and if he kills him while praying he would go to heaven though he has committed sin.

Polonius informs the queen that Hamlet will meet her soon. He gives some tips to her regarding how she should meet Hamlet and hides himself. Hamlet enters with anger. The queen tells him that he has offended the king but Hamlet replies she has offended his father too much. Hamlet says she has wicked tongue. He forces her to sit down. The queen is scared of Hamlet and she cries out in fear. Polonius also cries from behind the curtain and Hamlet kills him at once. He thinks that he has killed Claudius but soon he finds that he has killed Polonius. Hamlet defends his rash and bloody act by saying that his deed is not worse than killing brother and marring his wife. The queen is shocked. She does not know that Claudius has killed her husband. Hamlet criticizes his mother and asks her to compare her two husbands. The conscious of the queen is now awakened. She looks at soul as tainted and blackened. Hamlet's father's ghost appears in civil dress. This time the ghost is seen and heard by Hamlet alone. Hamlet thinks that the ghost has come to scold him for the delay to take revenge. But the ghost feels deeply for his wife. When queen looks at Hamlet that he is looking vacantly she thinks that he is mad. But Hamlet replies he is mentally sound. He asks her to repent, prey and avoid invitation to the bed of Claudius. Then he asks for forgiveness of his mother. He is cruel only to be kind. Hamlet takes the dead body of Polonius and asks his mother not say anything about his madness to Claudius. He also tells that he knows the reason about why is being to send England and he is not worried about his safety. He will turn the table.

Act - IV

The queen informs the king that Hamlet has killed Polonius. The king has no problem for the death of Polonius. But he thinks that Hamlet cannot be set free. He tells that Hamlet should be curbed and he may be held responsible for the murder. The queen says that Hamlet feels very sorry of the death. The king asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to meet Hamlet and ask about the dead body. The king tells the

queen that he will have to inform his counsellors about the death. Hamlet refuses to give information about the dead body to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and tell them they have sold their humanity for the sake of some money and the king will kill them. Claudius tells his counsellors that it is dangerous to keep Hamlet free. But he cannot punish or arrest him because common people will not like it. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come back and inform the king that they have tried hard but Hamlet has refused to tell about the body. The king himself questions about same but Hamlet's answers are apparently ravings with deeper meaning. He tells that he should go to heaven and find out and if he is not there he should go to hell to see him. Then king tells him that he will be sent to England for his safety. Hamlet understands the plan but he agrees to it. Hamlet goes and the king says that he wants the king of England to kill Hamlet. Fortinbras has arrived with army and he wants permission from the king of Denmark. Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are on the way to England. The captain meets Hamlet and after enquiry Hamlet learns that Fortinbras is going to attack for very small piece of land and Poland has prepared itself to face the attack. Hamlet thinks that the war between Poland and Norway is the outcome of much wealth and peace. He also compares himself with Fortinbras. Fortinbras is carrying thousands of men and money for imaginary honour while he is delaying taking revenge. He is eating and sleeping like animal and not using his reasoning faculty and it just rusting. He has forgotten his father. Fortinbras is a man of action while Hamlet only indulges in thinking.

Horatio urges the queen to visit Ophelia because she is partly mad on account of her father's death and also Hamlet's cruel treatment to her. The queen does not visit but Ophelia is allowed to meet. Ophelia sings songs about Hamlet and her father and a song about the maid who lost her virginity. Claudius calls Polonius's death as a very serious matter. It has led Ophelia to madness while Hamlet has to leave Denmark. Laertes comes back and he is furious. He directly stands before the king. The king is very frightened. He asks about his father. He is told that he is dead. The queen suggests that the king is not responsible for his death. Ophelia comes there and again Laertes' anger and fury is intensified. Claudius suggests Laertes that he should take advice of his friends and if the king is found guilty he is ready to offer the crown and also his life. He also tells him that he will explain everything to him. A letter from Hamlet is brought by some sailors in which Hamlet tells that his ship was attacked and he is prisoner. For his freedom he has promised a good reward to the

pirates. Horatio goes to meet the king. The king explained everything to Laertes about the death of his father. He also says that he wanted to push him but his mother was against it and he loves the queen and he cannot go against her wish. In addition to this that Hamlet is very popular and people of the state will not like it. But to Laertes all this does not matter and he wants to take revenge. A letter of Hamlet is given to the king which states the unfortunate condition of him and his wish to meet the king. Laertes feels delighted as he will get a chance to kill Hamlet and the king wants the same thing. He decides to arrange a fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes. If Hamlet dies in duel no one would blame the king. The king does not disclose his plan to Laertes who is ready to kill Hamlet even in the church. Claudius will dip the tip of Laertes' foil in poison and even small wound can cause Hamlet's death. Claudius has plan to keep a cup of poison when Hamlet will be thirsty he will be asked to drink it. Gertrude come there and informs that Ophelia is dead. She was drowned in the water due to grief. Laertes is very sad and he consoled by the king and the queen.

Act - V

Two gravediggers are digging a grave for Ophelia and while doing so they talk and the talk is very comical. Hamlet and Horatio arrive there. Hamlet is told that a grave is for a lady. They have dialogue with gravediggers and both of them talk about the skulls the gravediggers have found. Soon the king queen and Laertes with some lords come there in procession. Laertes expresses his displeasure over the arrangement of his sister's burial but the priest informs that the death was doubtful. The queen scatters the flowers on the body of Ophelia and she had wished that Ophelia should have married to Hamlet. Hamlet looks at Ophelia's body and he cries out. Laertes curses Hamlet as thinks that alone Hamlet is responsible for Ophelia's death. Hamlet and Laertes are almost on the verge of fighting. Laertes says he is willing to fight to settle the question of Hamlet's love for Ophelia. The queen defends Hamlet. Hamlet tells Laertes that he is not enemy of him and he should not be treated shabbily. Hamlet leaves the place and Claudius asks Laertes to seal the fate of Hamlet.

Hamlet narrates the events on the ship to Horatio. Hamlet informs him that he was shocked to read the letter by Claudius written to the king of England because the king was asked to cut off Hamlet's head. But Hamlet created a new plan and he sends the forgery letter asking the king of England to kill Rosencrantz and

Guildestern. Hamlet feels that he has done nothing wrong and God is with him. He justifies his act on several grounds with regard to Claudius and Rosencrantz and Guildestern are not innocent. Horatio urges Hamlet to take revenge at the earliest. Hamlet wishes that Laertes will understand him and forgive him too. Osric arrives with message of the king that there will be fencing contest between Hamlet and Laertes. Osric praises Laertes' skill of fencing to create Hamlet's jealousy. Osric goes and another lord comes and asks if Hamlet is ready for contest. He also informs that the king, the queen and other counsellors will be present of the contest. The queen also sends message for Hamlet to greet and behave politely with Laertes before they fight. Actually Hamlet has nothing against Laertes and he promises the queen to act as per her advice.

About Horatio's worry about the match Hamlet tells him that he is in practice and will fight. But he fears that something untoward may happen. Horatio wishes if anything goes wrong he will ask the king to delay match but Hamlet is against it. He will go with decrees of Providence. All have arrived to watch the match. Hamlet begs pardon of Laertes and gives explanation about the madness and but it is not accepted by Laertes and he leaves it for elder persons and does not think of reconciliation. There is friendly exchange between Hamlet and Laertes before the duel. Hamlet asks about the foils and Osric replies, as taught by the king, that both have blunt ends. Claudius declares he will drink wine if Hamlet hits Laertes in first three exchanges. People come to know about Hamlet's victory when they will hear trumpets. Hamlet wins first round. The king offers a drink to Hamlet but he refuses. The queen is delighted and the king pretends to be happy. The queen comes down and wipes the sweat of Hamlet and drinks a cup. The king asks her not to drink but she drinks. The king is in deep distress because he knows that soon the queen is going to die and conspiracy will be known to all.

After second round Laertes tells the king that he will surely shot Hamlet. Laertes knows that his foil is sharp and it is poisoned which is against the norms. Hamlet is wounded at unguarded moment. Hamlet realizes that the foil is sharp as feels the wound so he hits back with all his force and Laertes is deeply wounded. Laertes realizes his mistake. As the furious fight is going the queen drops down due to poison. Hamlet looks at his mother and he appears worried but the king assures him that she is fainted. The queen cries out that she is poisoned. Everybody now came to know the villainy of Claudius. Hamlet is in complete control of the situation and asks

to close all the doors so that the villain can be punished. Laertes gives a very clear confession of his crime. He tells the truth of foil. The king is responsible for the death of the queen, Laertes and Hamlet who is going to die soon. Hamlet takes the poisoned sword and hits it into the heart of the king. Both the queen and Laertes held the as responsible for the conspiracy. The king thinks that he is only hurt and he will survive but Hamlet forces him to drink poison. Laertes in his dying moments turns to Hamlet and calls him noble and says he will not him blame for the death of his father and his own death. There is reconciliation. Hamlet also assures him that he is also guilty of his death and, "Heaven make thee free of it!"

Hamlet is very eager to explain the people all the events and circumstances that have resulted in the king's murder. But he is on the verge of death and he is not in position tell it so he requests Horatio to explain. But he emphasizes with clear conscious that to make justice he has taken such a fatal step. But Horatio wants to put an end to his life because Hamlet is dying. Hamlet persuades him not to end his life because people should get correct information about his action to avoid confusion among the people of the state.

Fortinbras arrives there after his military operations. It is a great shock for him to see so many deaths from the family. The ambassadors from England inform that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been duly dispatched. Horatio explains everything to Fortinbras as he wanted to lay his claim for the crown of Denmark and know about the deaths. Horatio says that Hamlet has vindicated the claims of Fortinbras. Fortinbras is a man of action. He immediately orders his captains to arrange for the burial of the dead in the right military style. He says,

"For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royal."

4.12 Glossary and notes

Palmy – prosperous

Tenantless -- the dead bodies came out the graves

Gibber -- to cry like an ape

Inky -- dark clothes for mourning

Hyperion -- a Greek God of the sun

Satyr -- a Greek God, half-man and half-animal known for his ugliness

Be teem – grant

Frailty -- here it is immorality

Nature -- man

Thews -- muscles

Waxes – grows

Chariest – most modest

Prodigal -- extravagant

Moon -- man

Calumnious stroke -- slander

Primrose path of dalliance -- sensuous and sensual pleasures

Undergo – accumulate

Pregnant – to the point, significant

Quintessence – highest essence

Chopine - woman's high-soled shoes

Uncurrent gold - unfit for currency

Bodykins – dear body, popular Elizabethan oath

John-a-dreams -- John, the dreamer

Unpregnant of my cause – unable to act

Plastering art – aides to beauty like lipstick and power

Shuffled off this mortal coil -- to die

Bodkin – dagger

Pith and moment -- great importance

Orisons – prayers

Nunnery – brothel

Monsters - cuckold

God's creatures -- pet animals like dog

Chameleon's dish – air

Knavish piece of work – the play-within play dealing with villainy

Unwring – not painted

Forest of feathers – gaudily dressed actors with feathers on cap

Turn turk – to change for worse

Roses – rose shaped ornaments

Cry – company

Nero – Nero murdered his mother Agrippina who was the wife of Claudius. Agrippina lived an incestuous life with brother and killed her husband

Prima eldest curse – Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain killed his brother Abel for which God cursed him

Blister – in the Elizabethan time a prostitute was branded on the forehead which caused a blister to distinguish her from other women

Dicer – gambler

Hyperion a Titan God who was the god of the sun before Apollo, the Olympian god

Mars – Greek god of war

Mercury – the messenger of the god

Flattering unction – ointment which does not give any relief

Trepass - sin

Hoist with his own Petard – to make breaches in the walls and fortifications with help of machine

Larga discourse – intelligence and reasoning

Looking before and after – over-reflections

Riband – a decoration or virtue

Livery – Showy dress

Quiddits legal equivocations

Quillets – nice points of a law

Pelion – the giants in order to fight with the gods piled Pelion on Ossa

Woo't – would you

Esil – a river or the Nile or vinegar; the Elizabethan gallants attempted to undertake all sorts of impossible feats for love

Gain-giving – misgiving

Fall of sparrow – Are not two sparrows sold for farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your father

Presence – the whole court

Faction – partisan body

Ungored – unstained

Stick fiery off – show in brilliant contrast

Quit - repay

Judgment - request for a referee's decision

Fat – out of practice

Swounds – swoons

Union – pearl

Mutes – actors who walk without speaking on the stage

Unsatisfied – ignorant of the truth and confused

Antique Roman – like noble roman who committed suicide rather than the face disgrace

Over-crows – overpowers

Quarry – pile of slain, refers to deer killed in a hunt

Havoc – wanton killings followed by battle cry

Rights of memory - claims that will be remembered

More – votes or more voices

Passage – death

4.13 Characterization

Hamlet

Hamlet has been called as the Mona Lisa of English literature because both the play *Hamlet* and character of Hamlet are very complex. Many critics in the last four centuries have examined the character of Hamlet in many ways but absolute truth has not emerged so far. Everyone understands Hamlet but in his own way because Hamlet has multiple dimensions of living person. In fact, Hamlet does not only challenge to Guildenstern but to all of us when he says, "You would pluck out the heart of my mystery." Every time he appears different to us. Our relationship to him changes every time just like our relationship with the people in our life. Perhaps this is a reason why he is having a long lasting courtship with the audience.

In the beginning of the play, we find Hamlet as disillusioned man because he has lost his father. He is in great grief. His grief is further aggravated because his mother marries to his uncle within less than two months after his father's death. His ideal of motherhood is crushed. Already he has poor opinion about his Uncle Claudius though Hamlet is unaware of the fact that his father is murdered by his uncle. His faith in the values of life has been destroyed on account of his father's death and also human infidelity.

But it is important to see what kind of person Hamlet was in his father's life time. He was the Elizabethan ideal gentleman, good all-rounder, scholar, courtier, and soldier. He was very popular with people. He leads the attack in sea-fight against the pirates. To put in short Hamlet was naturally active young University student who was very fond of his studies, games and good mixer. But at the time of the play he is disillusioned and he is very gloomy. It is important to note what Ophelia says of him. According to her Hamlet was the Elizabethan ideal gentleman, a good all-rounder, scholar, model courtier, and soldier. He used to observe all mannerism properly. He was popular with people of the state. He was good in fencing and perhaps other sports also. He is also fond of the stage. Thus Hamlet was naturally active young University student who is fond of studies, sports and a good mixer. He was champion of Denmark. He has no friends but Horatio loves him unconditionally. He is made for honesty but life forces him to walk on misleading and dim and winding ways. He has no choice but to waste himself in ingenuity and crafty tactics. He could have used all his strength for honesty, happiness and human love. But he is

caught in a world of deceit and selfishness. His idealism takes the form of pessimism, and his heart is sterile and instead of spending his energy in happiness and joyous feeling, he spends it in corruption which is around him. He makes himself mad but there was method in his madness.

Hamlet loves Ophelia very deeply. He never lost his love but he had to abandon that due to the ghost's command. He treats Ophelia very cruelly. It is not true that he was not truly in love. It is important to see his actions and his frenzy in the graveyard. This shows he loves her too much. He was in her love from his university days and very fondly the queen hopes Ophelia as wife her son. Hasty marriage of his mother has changed Hamlet completely and he thinks that all women are frail. Ophelia's docility hastens the target of both Hamlet and herself.

There is the common interpretation that Hamlet is dreamer who is lost in thought. The paradox of Hamlet's nature draws people to the character. He is at once the consummate iconoclast, in self-imposed exile from Elsinore Society, while, at the same time, he is the adulated champion of Denmark — the people's hero. He has no friends left, but Horatio's love for him is unconditional. He is angry, dejected, depressed, and brooding but he is no less enthusiastic and energetic. He is a man who criticizes himself and his fate. But he is an existential thinker who faces his life with his own ideals and terms. For Hamlet life is not just to live but he observes it closely. He thinks of the decay of Danish state but he does not blame just one person, Claudius. He knows the irony of human efforts. He loves a man with all his contradiction. He also does not spare himself for his failure to act in time. Words are always with him like his weapons.

Hamlet has a firm faith in the providential control of life and events. Claudius has murdered Hamlet's father and Laertes establishes that he is also responsible for the death of his mother before the court. Hamlet is able to execute Claudius for his crimes. Tragedy of his death is that it comes when he was proved most royal. Hamlet's spirit has undergone a tragic development from the self-destructive negation of life to a new affirmation of the providential sanctity of life and it is this readiness that redeems Hamlet.

Ophelia

The character of Ophelia is drawn by Shakespeare very skillfully and with sympathy. It is interesting to note that the female roles were played by the boys so

naturally there was lot of limitation on Shakespeare while drawing the female characters and Ophelia is no exception. She has all good qualities of the heart but none of the head. She is too soft, too fair and too good to face realities of the life. She is completely helpless and too good food for other worldly people to use her. In fact, her father says, “She is so young and immature, frail and delicate, that she does not know even her own feelings”. As a result, she falls and bleeds upon the thorns of cruel life. It is very naturally difficult for Ophelia for being a frail and delicate person to face bitter realities of life.

Ophelia has child- like simplicity and she is not like her fatter who engages himself in secret schemes and hides his thoughts. She is completely free from corrupt influences of court. But she loves Hamlet and her love for Hamlet is genuine and stable. Her world of experience is too small. She has experience of only three persons namely Polonius, her father, Lactes, her brother and Hamlet, her lover. In her life she is in situation where she has lost her father, her brother is far from her and her lover is mad. She may not speak about her love for Hamlet in more elegant manner like other romantic heroines as she is unfortunate child of fortune. She is passionate about her love for Hamlet.

Hamlet with full conviction says that Ophelia is fair physically and morally. But Hamlet’s hopes are destroyed when Ophelia asks him to return back the gifts and letters. She is very obedient girl and she does not act but she is asked to act. She does whatever her father asks her to do without thinking about the consequences of the same. Hamlet then abuses her and he raises the question about her chastity. He asks her to go to nunnery and marry somebody to make him cuckold. But Ophelia still loves him as she thinks that he is mad. Accidentally Hamlet kills Polonius and Ophelia is full grief for the failure in love for Hamlet and also her father’s death. She is shattered now but tries not to show her grief. She is very timid and does not do anything good to Hamlet and to herself also. She becomes mad. But even her madness she constantly refers to her love. Ophelia is left with nobody to help her. She suffers and dies and story of sweet, weak, obedient and lovable girl who was sweet in her life, in her madness and even her death comes to an end.

Polonius

Polonius is the Lord Chamberlain and chief courtier at Elsinore. He is a typical courtier and the King’s confidant. He supports the king and he is in his favour. The

King thinks that Polonius is a clever man and that is why he has position in the State and the value which the King places upon his services. Polonius has tremendous self-confidence. Hamlet describes him as, “tedious, wretched, intruding fool”. But he was a university student taking a lively interest in drama and acting and different forms of culture. He played the part of Julius Caesar. He also makes comments about different types of dramas like classical and romantic. Hamlet makes fun of him so we do not take him seriously. But once he was a romantic lover who later developed disliking for the same. He always speaks with seriousness. But he does not have a sense of wit or humour. He often takes and uses big words for a small thing or affair. He uses his fund of wisdom which can be seen in his use of maxims. Even Queen asks him to give more matter with less art. He behaves like a fool and thinks that his follies are wisdom. He always thinks that he is right and jumps to conclusions. He thinks that he is fooling Hamlet but he does not imagine that he is being fooled. He brings himself everywhere and settles questions. He hides himself behind a curtain and overhears talk and sends a man to spy out his son. He shows real wisdom only when he talks to Ophelia about Hamlet’s love for her. But he is very harsh, thoughtless about the feelings of Ophelia.

But his loyalty to the King is beyond shadow of doubt. He goes to his best to serve the cause of his master. So he is called by critics as a real statesman, polite, keen-sighted and he was most valuable to the dead King and also to the present king. But a word must be said about him as the father. He deeply loves his son and daughter in his own way. He wanted his children to place in a better position in the society. He has his own ideas about morality, education and ethics and he wanted his children to follow his ideas of the same. He allows his son Laertes to live in Paris but he inculcates him conventional moral values and asked him to take pains to maintain his reputation. He asks him to stay away from bad habits like gambling, drinking and immorality. He is very strict in relation with Ophelia and wants to stay away from the bad influence of the Court. He does not entrain Hamlet’s love for Ophelia and dismisses it by saying that Hamlet’s intention is not noble. He does not think that anybody can fall in love and says that there is no possibility of Ophelia’s marriage with Hamlet. Thus he destroys Ophelia’s life. But Polonius pays a penalty for his foolish behavior.

Claudius

In the opening of the play Claudius has achieved his desire close to heart. He is very confident of both his ability and position. He has forgotten his guilt of adulatory with his brother's wife and murder of his own brother. Now he is very happy to possess crown and his beloved queen. He was not only successful in criminal daring but he was also able politician. He was attractive and able to win adulterous love of the Queen. At this point of time he has his throne and Queen and he only wants peace to enjoy his life. Being shrewd he cleverly declares war against Norway and he also able to win the support for his chief counselors for his plan. He also tries to win goodwill of Hamlet by requesting him to stay in Denmark to enjoy his royal favour. He tries to make out of difficult situations and preaches such acceptance to Hamlet.

But Hamlet was in deep mourning even after two months of father's death. Hamlet has complaints against Claudius for his throne and his marriage to his mother. In four months' time Hamlet's behavior has become strange and very dangerous. Hamlet's strange and dangerous behavior was the only problem for Claudius. He wants run the state smoothly and enjoy his life of power but Hamlet was only obstacle. So Claudius sends spies on Hamlet to watch him and understand the problem of him. But both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could not tell anything. But Claudius witnesses the scene between Hamlet and Ophelia and understands that Hamlet is threat to his life. Now Claudius has to protect himself so he sends Hamlet to England.

In spite of guilt Claudius always keeps his composure and never loses his control. But when he sees the performance of the play arranged by Hamlet and his opening remarks, Claudius comes to know that Hamlet has knowledge of his father's murder. Hamlet makes it very clear that he would take revenge. Now Claudius does not think of killing Hamlet but engages himself in spiritual despair. He wants to repent for his sin and win salvation of his soul. But this salvation is difficult for him because he will have to confess his guilt, give up his crown and face possible execution. He loves Gertrude most passionately and does not wish to lose her. He also loves life, power and pleasures of life. He wishes to enjoy life. But he is worried because Hamlet has created a feeling of guilt in his mind. Even his nature has also prayed for the grace which would help him to live life of pleasures and peace.

Claudius apart from enjoying his personal life, he also wants to win love and admiration of all. He maintains cordial politeness and concern when Hamlet speaks very rudely. But he always feels that he should have more than his due and for this he never questions to himself. It appears that he thinks that the evil nature of him is the will of the heaven. He becomes like a god of the universe by killing his brother. But Hamlet kills Polonius and Claudius is disturbed because he thinks that Hamlet is danger to his life. At this time, he wants to keep himself safe and also does not want to disturb Gertrude's peace of mind. He knows that he is guilty but he would go ahead with his life of happiness and he also wants to plan to murder Hamlet. He plans to convert Hamlet's exile into his death. He also does not bother about how he would answer for the death of Hamlet. His plan to murder Hamlet does not work but he is immediately ready with a new plan. He uses Laertes instead of the king of England as his instrument. But again his plan fails and this time it results into the accidental death of his beloved wife and his own final end.

Claudius depends on his ability to shape his destiny. He creates plans after plan in desperate attempt to preserve his power, life and his beloved wife. But let's not forget that he is trying to save his power, life and his wife which he has got through ill and unethical manner. When Laertes threatens throne and when Gertrude drinks the poison Claudius only thinks of his life and does not bother about his soul. He simply ignores his sin and does not repent for it. He dies as a man with sin though he wanted salvation.

Gertrude, the Queen

Gertrude is the beloved wife of Claudius and mother of Hamlet. Gertrud is responsible for Hamlet's anguish and inability to executive his plan of revenge of his father's murder. She wants both Claudius and Hamlet to reconcile but her desire remains unfulfilled. We tempt to criticize her too easily because she fails to meet Hamlet's ideal of womanhood. The Queen is not evil by nature but she is shallow minded. She realizes that she is guilty in a hasty marriage. The fact is that she is not a strong person and she can be easily led. She accepts things as they are and do not think of their real nature. About her husband's death she takes a word of Claudius that he was bitten by a snake. She never takes initiative but only follows the instructions. She does not object when Polonius and the king decide to spy on Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia. But it is important to note that she is told by the king that it is for Hamlet's welfare.

Gertrude is blissfully unaware of the basic principles of ethics and morality. Happiness is only her concern. She does not think of her second marriage as anything wrong and she realizes it only after she is told about it. She does not have a sense of devotion or loyalty. She loved her first husband but she believes more in the pleasures of life. She believes in present moment of happiness and does not look back. She was a symbol of grief when her husband dies but within a month she marries Claudius. But she was not a party to the murder of her husband because Hamlet's father does not complain about her. In interview Hamlet tries to awaken his mother's conscience. She truly feels repentant and thinks herself guilty. Her love for her son is most genuine. She is very much worried when she sees that Hamlet is mad. She wants Ophelia as Hamlet's wife. Her happiness' is constantly disturbed due to Hamlet's condition. Claudius knows also her weakness for son so he does not entertain her in the matters of Hamlet. She feels happy when Hamlet's friends come to provide company. She feels that her son is engaged in music and art. She gives a false account of the death of Polonius. At the fencing match she hopes for Hamlet's win. After few round she wipes the face of her son. She drinks a cup of poison as a mark of her son's victory. She is loved by her son and husband but both of them do not trust her. When she dies after drinking a cup poison Claudius tries to tell people that she has fainted but she with all her strength exposes the conspiracy. She complains against her husband. Motherhood wins over all other considerations. She values and believes in Hamlet and not her husband.

Horatio

Horatio is the only true friend of Hamlet. He is a man of true integrity and a stern moralist. He is not only sensible and sane but also very practical man. He doesn't believe in ghosts in the beginning. He thinks that it is the fantasy of the guard. Even after watching the ghost he is still not convinced. He is not involved in wild and whirling words. His speech is short, practical and to the point. He takes his life as it comes and keeps himself cool, calm and collected. He controls his emotions. He has complete control of himself and he never carries any malice against anybody. Hamlet really appreciates the qualities that Horatio has and he does not have. He gives best possible advice to Hamlet. Hamlet is facing all his enemies but he turns to Horatio for all his secrets that he wants to share. Hamlet and Horatio have met at the university and their friendship has continued.

Horatio never likes to come in the lime light. He prefers to remain in the background and moves quietly. Selfishness never touches him and he faces all problems of life with smiling face. Horatio is not aristocratic but he never expects anything from Hamlet. The existence of the ghost is brought to the notice of Horatio and not to the king. Horatio knows that appearance ghost may affect Hamlet. Hamlet's safety is the only concern for him. He tries his best to keep Hamlet away from the ghost. When Hamlet faces wildest passions Horatio tries to soothe him and supports him. Hamlet tells about his plan to test conscience of the king about ghost's message. When both of them walk in the graveyard Horatio asks Hamlet not to think about skulls and death.

Horatio is against everything that is corrupt and shallow. He is also not in favour of unnecessary act of cruelty. He stops Hamlet from the act of execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because he knows that both of them are mere tools and they know nothing about the plot. He also tries to keep away Hamlet from participating duel with Laertes. When Hamlet is wounded fatally, Horatio expresses his desire to die but he is refrained from committing suicide by Hamlet. He has to live to tell the truth to the world. It is necessary because the world will know that Hamlet is not tainted with the crime of murder of the king. Horatio also prays for rest in heaven for Hamlet because he has suffered lot on the earth. In other words, Horatio rehabilitates Hamlet and he is treated heroically. Through the play Horatio is presented as the norm or model of correct behavior.

The Ghost

It is important to note that the king James I believed in ghosts. Dramatists used witches and fairies in the plays. As per Elizabethan belief the ghosts can be of two types. One that is seen in the imagination and second that is seen in reality. In Hamlet the ghost of Hamlet's father is both objective and subjective. The ghost in the play is not projection of the imagination. It is an objective. The ghost appears in the play in the fourteenth line of the first scene of the first act. But some critics think that the ghost is a fancy of Hamlet. But when Hamlet learns about the ghost he reacts like Protestant because Protestants believe that ghost cannot come from hell or heaven. Hamlet believes in the ghost when he himself talks to the ghost but when it disappears he says that there are more things in heaven and earth than we can imagine.

But the influence of the ghost on Hamlet is very powerful. He changes himself completely and destroys himself in the destruction of his enemies. The ghost appears twice to Hamlet. The first time ghost appears in the armour which Hamlet senior wore in his great victory against Norway and military operations. The second time ghost appears in his night clothes in the setting of his wife's bedroom. These two scenes we see Hamlet senior's great joy due to victory in the war and in second scene we see that he is defeated because his wife betrayed his love by having affair with Claudius. Now Hamlet, senior wants to take revenge and wishes for the death of Claudius. The ghost is also seen as a revenge-ghost and establishes the motive for the tragic action. It was very much part of the tradition of revenge tragedy from ancient Greece to Elizabethan times.

Laertes

Laertes is a brother of Ophelia and a son of Polonius. Like his father he is very much interested in showiness. He is more interested in superficial appearances of the things rather than deeper aspects of the same. He is very much interested in sensual pleasures rather than those intellectual pleasures. That is why he wants to go to Paris. Paris offers pleasures and luxury. Both his father and his sister know his frailties of flesh. He cares more for decorum and fashion of the day. His glitter is very much superficial. He has no experience of true love and he thinks that women are commodities and can be bought. He asks his sister not to entertain Hamlet because he thinks that Hamlet is libertine.

We find him showing courage only when he tries to take revenge of his father's death. He is even ready to dare damnation. He also demands explanation from the king for not giving proper honour and noble rite to his father at the funeral of his father. But he becomes puppet in the hands of the king. His grief for his father's death and also sister is not sincere enough. Hamlet tells him that he has no right to grieve for Ophelia. He simply challenges Hamlet. Hamlet begs for his pardon for his deed. But Hamlet's explanation is ignored by Laertes and he misses the opportunity to become friendly with Hamlet. He tries to play a foul game with Hamlet in the duel. But it is important to note that when the king criticizes him for his poor performance he replies that it is against his consciousness to fight with a poisoned rapier. After a taunt from Hamlet, he tries most desperately and kills Hamlet but he is also killed. He admits that he is killed because of his own treachery and also tells Hamlet that the king is responsible for this foul play. Here he admits his guilt and

also asks for forgiveness. Finally, to some extent Laertes creates a favorable impression about himself in our mind.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

Before the play begins Hamlet has high opinion about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Different events in the play prove that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are worthless. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are a pair of courtier and fellow-students of Hamlet. Hamlet welcomes them at Elsinore but he does not know about why they have come there. But very soon Hamlet understands the reality about their arrival and he is disappointed. He realizes that they have come to learn about mystery of Hamlet's behaviour. But Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not true villains. They are forced by the situation to become villains. They are not doing their job with much interest. Hamlet is too smart and intelligent for both of them. They are very fond of flattery and also truly loyal to the king. They try to find out real reason behind Hamlet's mad behaviour and they suggest that ambition is responsible for his depression. When Hamlet asks them about why they have come. They reply that they are sent by the king. Now Hamlet is completely disappointed and irritated. They think that it is their duty to serve the king because the king has divine right. It is their duty to serve Claudius in any good or bad manner. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are conscious criminals. They are unaware of evil design of the king and simply they follow the king. The lack individual integrity and total dependence on the king forces them to the same fate as the king.

Fortinbras

Fortinbras is the son of the Norwegian king who was defeated by Hamlet's father. It was greatest victory for Hamlet's father. Fortinbras' father was killed by Hamlet's father and a part of his kingdom was lost. As an ambitious young man he wants to revenge of his father's defeat and also to regain the land that was lost. But in course of events in the play Fortinbras becomes the king of Denmark. Hamlet's father is murdered by Claudius and both Hamlet and Claudius also die. In fact, it is Hamlet who becomes instrumental in making Fortinbras as the king of Denmark.

Fortinbras is dynamic and very active. He engages himself in his activities and military preparations. But we see him in the play in the last scene of the play. Like Hamlet, Fortinbras has lost his father and he is also dispossessed. But he is loyal to his uncle. He wants to win a kingdom for himself and he also attacks Poland and

wins a small portion of the land and he successfully becomes the king of Denmark. Hamlet has great admiration for Fortinbras who has heroic qualities and he moves with action. Like Hamlet, Fortinbras never engages himself in philosophical thinking. As person both Hamlet and Fortinbras are different from each other but they have respect for each other. Hamlet gives his support to Fortinbras and Fortinbras also pays homage to Hamlet. In reality Fortinbras does not have great qualities but he understands the simple facts and becomes successful.

Osric

Osric is more like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He is fashionable courtier and he enters very late in the play. He is there to provide fun and nobody takes him seriously. He is enjoying his place in the court and follows the latest fashion to create excitement for people in the form of ridicule. Claudius has foolish counselors like Polonius also people like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Osric is the most foolish who will not call spade as spade. He always speaks in heavy and pompous language to display his wisdom and humbleness but in reality it is sheer stupidity of him. But Osric is important character because he is a part of plot against Hamlet. Most of the wicked people die in the end of the people but Osric does not die because Hamlet thinks that he is not a genuine villain.

4.14 Check your Progress

C) Select the correct alternative write the sentence.

- 1) is the only true friend of Hamlet.
a) Horatio b) Claudius c) Ophelia d) Rosencrantz
- 2) does not die because Hamlet thinks that he is not a genuine villain.
a) Horatio b) Osric c) Ophelia d) Rosencrantz
- 3) is the son of the Norwegian king
a) Horatio b) Osric c) Fortinbras d) Rosencrantz
- 4) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are a pair of
a) warriors b) fools c) courtier d) kings
- 5) Laertes is a brother of
a) Horatio b) Claudius c) Ophelia d) Rosencrantz

- 6) The second time ghost appears in his in the setting of his wife's bedroom.
- a) ghostly clothes b) royal clothes
c) favourite clothes d) night clothes
- 7) The ghost appears to Hamlet.
- a) thrice b) once c) rarely d) twice
- 8) is against everything that is corrupt and shallow.
- a) Horatio b) Osric c) Fortinbras d) Rosencrantz
- 9) played the part of Julius Caesar in the play.
- a) Horatio b) Osric c) Fortinbras d) Polonius
- 10) Gertrude is the beloved wife of
- a) Claudius b) Osric c) Fortinbras d) Polonius
- 11) marries twice in the life.
- a) Claudius b) Gertrude c) Fortinbras d) Polonius
- 12) Polonius is murdered by
- a) Claudius b) Gertrude c) Fortinbras d) Hamlet
- 13) There is in the madness of Hamlet.
- a) method b) system c) stupidity d) no reason
- 14) is the lord Chamberlain and chief courtier at Elsinore.
- a) Claudius b) Polonius c) Fortinbras d) Hamlet
- 15) is completely free from corrupt influences of court.
- a) Claudius b) Gertrude c) Ophelia d) Hamlet
- 16) orders his captains to prepare for royal funeral for Hamlet.
- a) Claudius b) Gertrude c) Fortinbras d) Polonius
- 17) is described as Mona Lisa of literature.
- a) Claudius b) Gertrude c) Ophelia d) Hamlet

- 18) Polonius sends his man to spy ... to Paris.
 a) Laertes b) Gertrude c) Ophelia d) Hamlet
- 19) In the duel Hamlet is fatally wounded by
 a) Claudius b) Osric c) Laertes d) Polonius
- 20) The performance of the was successful in revealing Claudius's guilt.
 a) military b) music c) play d) Hamlet

4.15 Key to check your progress

A) 1 --- b 2 --- c 3----b 4 -----b 5----b

B) 1—John Shakespeare, father of Shakespeare

2 --- two

3—1611

4—Mary Arden

5—25th, March, 1616

C) 1—a 2 –b 3 –c 4—c 5 – c
 6 –d 7 –d 8 –a 9 – d 10 – a
 11 – b 12 -- d 13 –a 14 –b 15 –c
 16 –c 17--d 18 –a 19--c 20 – c

4.16 Criticism of Hamlet

Hamlet's mysterious delay in fulfilling his revenge has created much critical speculation about the so-called problem of Hamlet. Hamlet is scrutinized by Goethe, Coleridge and Freud and his disciples and there is no end to this. There is much theorizing about mysterious factor in Hamlet's character which prohibits him from taking action. But now in recent times the whole play's mysterious quality, different investigations of the characters being seen to the point to the deeper mystery of reality which is concentrated in the mysterious figure of the ghost and ironic workings of the Providence. *Hamlet* is not seen just as psychological tragedy of Hamlet but as profound religious drama which attempts to discover the cosmic mysteries of existence. Hamlet tells his friend, Horatio "There are more things in

heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” In course of the play all the characters try to reveal these mysteries. But we should stand in awe before Shakespeare’s genius and the profundity of his creation. There are various interpretations of *Hamlet* but the main theme is to show how the will to act can be delayed by thinking about the action.

Dr. Johnson is the major critic of Hamlet and his first criticism is a partially negative because he does not see reason for Hamlet to become mad and so it is faulty catastrophe. T.S. Eliot calls it as artistic failure for *Hamlet* is dominated by excessive emotions. Bernard Grebanier thinks that Hamlet has not delay his revenge but carried it efficiently as circumstances permitted and he finds Hamlet as healthy, vigorous and much in love with life. Goethe calls Hamlet as nobly weak-willed. The major historical tradition accepts Hamlet as an example of Aristotle’s model tragic hero. For the man who is noble, pure and of moral nature it is too hard to act. He sinks under the burden of which he cannot bear or throw away. Coleridge also thinks that Hamlet was rationalizing everything and it the cause of the delay and he thinks that Hamlet’s weakness is the result of his over-intellectual cast of mind. A.C Bradley thinks that Hamlet is psychologically melancholic. Bradley thinks that the direct cause of Hamlet’s delay was a state of mind quite abnormal and induced by special circumstances. Bradley thinks very much in the line of Johnson, Goethe, and Coleridge and says that Hamlet is symbol of a tragic mystery inherent in human nature.

However, critics have objected to different interpretations of Hamlet and to some of them interpretations are most fascinating but finally irrelevant. More than four hundred years’ burden of critical comments on the play has been the attempted to explain Hamlet’s psychology. But Hamlet remains as the cosmic mystery.

4.17 Use of prose

Shakespeare uses blank verse for his plays and *Hamlet* is no exception. But prose is also used with certain purpose. The prose is used for comic characters and characters of lower social position. It was literary convention at a time when literature was aristocratic and the main characters in the plays were kings and nobles. The scenes in which characters from lower positions are contrasted with the main characters and to show this contrast medium of prose is used. To emphasis the height of the feeling of the main characters instead of prose, blank verse is used. Prose is

also used in case of the characters that have distracted minds. Ophelia uses broken prose due to her distracted state of mind. Here use of prose is much better than verse as it beautifully carries half sense. It should be carefully study as how from verse to prose and from verse to prose changes and the reasons of the same. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern talk in prose with Hamlet. But with Horatio, Hamlet uses verse because he talks about the things which are most important in life while with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern it is small-talk. Hamlet expresses his contempt for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in prose better when he seems them in their true colours. The main characters use prose when they talk about their lower level of feeling. When Hamlet is away from lower characters he talks in blank verse. Ophelia and Hamlet talk in blank verse. But when she is criticized by Hamlet she falls to the lower emotional level and speaks in prose. When she is left alone she speaks in blank verse about Hamlet's fallen state. After discovering Claudius as mortal enemy Hamlet speaks in prose with the king. With his mother he speaks in blank verse and tells that he is not mad. When Hamlet, Horatio and clowns are together they talk in prose. Osric talks in prose and his speech is satire on the diction of the court.

The passage which begins "What a piece of work is man!" shows how Shakespeare can write prose of power not less than the power of blank verse. The passage is prose-poetry which is spontaneous outburst of emotions. Shakespeare shows his unique and complete mastery of his style and diction. The philosophical meditations of Hamlet or Laertes' angry scenes and the drolleries of the two clowns show high level of excellence in terms of prose and blank verse.

4.18 *Hamlet* as a Shakespearean Tragedy

Shakespeare follows certain aspects of Greek drama in design and execution. The tragic hero is a man of high status and of noble nature but with he is with tragic flaw. The tragic hero is a man of high status but his fate normally affects the welfare of the state. The hero in the tragedy is also torn in conflict in his mind. This conflict-both external and internal is the crux of the Shakespearean tragedy. Tragic heroes are lonely figures. In the end there is triumph of Evil for the time being but the ultimate triumph of good is assured. It is against this background we have to look at *Hamlet* as Shakespearean tragedy. Hamlet presents a great calamity which leads to the death of the hero. Hamlet is into collision with iron forces of moral and natural. Hamlet is in extreme agony facing the arrows and slings of an outrageous fortune. He is denied

his rightful inheritance. His death certainly affects the entire state. Fortinbras become the king of Denmark after the death of Hamlet. Tragic hero commands respect and admiration of the kingdom Hamlet is the hero of noble mind who was, 'rose of the fair state'. But Hamlet is not a symbol of virtues and perfection. His tragedy is result of his tragic flaw. He is in terrible circumstances too strong for him. He tries to rise to the occasion but he finds it too difficult to handle. Hamlet's struggling continues all the time in the play. He only suffers, fails but he commands our respect and admiration.

Stitch in time is always better. You cannot afford to make it late. But Hamlet cannot act promptly. It does not mean that Hamlet lacks courage or he is not capable of action. But he understands futility of action. He cannot act because he is very much sensitive about moral aspects of the action and he also doubts about ghost's revelation. He kills Polonius and kills Rosencrantz and Guildenstern like a skilled soldier. But critics think it Hamlet's intellectual mind that prevents him from action. Some critics also think that it is melancholy state of mind that prevents him from action. Hamlet's delay may be due to some mental or physical disability or may due to lack of nerve or thinking too much. But it is necessary to understand explanation of Hamlet's delay in action. There is ample evidence to Hamlet's action. He has courage and not delicate body or mind. He follows the ghost when his friends are afraid. Some critics think that Hamlet does not get chance to kill Claudius because he is always protected by Swiss bodyguards. But many critics simply do not accept this view because if Laertes can come to take revenge of his father's death and create terror in the heart of the king, then it was always easy for Hamlet to take revenge. It was not difficult for him to revolt against the king but he doesn't.

Hamlet was studying philosophy in the University. He looked at life from a distance. He says, 'What a piece of work is a man!'. But later on he changes his mind when he realizes that his father is murdered by his uncle for lust of power. The second shock to Hamlet is in the form of her mother's marriage with his uncle. Now he is in the company of rude reality. Hamlet, a student of philosophy, was going through most terrible experience. It is natural for him to think that action is sheer futility. Even if he kills the king, the world is still an unweeded garden. So we should think before we blame Hamlet for his delay in action.

Fate plays a crucial role in the tragedy of Hamlet. He wanted to change the world but he failed. He always speaks about destiny. He says, 'There's a divinity that

shapes our end'. It is a fact that he fails to kill the king is also a game of a blind chance. It is pirate ship that helps Hamlet to come to Denmark. Supernaturalism also plays a very prominent role in *Hamlet*. It creates a note of mystery and intensifies the tragedy. The ghost appears twice before Hamlet. First Hamlet, guards and Horatio see the ghost. On second occasion it is only Hamlet who sees the ghost and his mother could not see. The ghost becomes a real character with human feelings who feels for his erring wife.

Hamlet, the hero of the play, dies but it is not pessimistic in nature. Tragedy is deeply pessimistic at least in its implications. Hamlet, a rose of the fair state, the glass of fashion, the mould of form, has to die but we shall never think of the play as pessimistic. The hero of great tragedy has a victorious mind, and he is unmoved even when he is attacked with the arrows and slings of evil fortune. Shakespeare has depicted the noble conception of human nature in Hamlet which is tragic but not pessimistic.

4.19 In what sense is Hamlet the hero and Claudius the villain –

The answer to this question is not simple. Both Hamlet and Claudius have murdered persons. In this sense both of them are equally guilty. Claudius had committed adultery with his own brother's wife and also killed his brother. Claudius murders his brother to become the king and he also marries Gertrude, wife of brother. We see Claudius as an able administrator of the kingdom who wants to maintain peace in the kingdom not through war but through negotiations. We also witness his moral nature when we see him that he is aware of his guilt which forces him to religious despair. Claudius appears to represent the corrupt through life-affirming aspect of the play. On the other hand, Hamlet's original purity of the soul is terribly sickened by the evil that he experienced in the world that he becomes a spirit of negation and he was almost in the mood to suicide or murder. But ghost's appearance and his wish to take revenge of Claudius helps to change Hamlet's mood and hostility and makes him to think of reformation of evils in society. But his already disturbed psychological state is also aggravated. He does not kill Claudius as he thinks that his soul might escape eternal damnation. But he kills Polonius unknowingly and insults his corpse. Hamlet gives very cruel treatment to Ophelia and she loses her sanity and finally dies. Hamlet also arranges for the executions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern without giving them any chance to confess. When

Claudius kneels in prayer and Hamlet waits with sword and evil desire to destroy both body and soul of Claudius, it appears that it is Claudius who is hero and Hamlet as the villain.

But Hamlet does not savagely lash out with tongue or hand and waiting only to take revenge. Claudius has only wished to enjoy the fruits of his one crime. If he had managed to live with patience and control to keep himself unaware of Hamlet's madness still he is true villain of the play and Hamlet, a hero in the spiritual world of Shakespeare. To Shakespeare hero is different from villain in the perception of man's necessary dependence on the divine will. Claudius had tried to convince Hamlet by telling him that death of his father was heaven's will and he should respect that. But Claudius himself is guilty of his inability to accept the divine will that offers his brother the crown and woman he loved. But he plotted to change his destiny by killing his brother and also he had planned Hamlet's murder. But it is only Hamlet who stands against Claudius' enjoyment of the fruits of his crime and evil design. Claudius was more like god of his own world and makes all efforts to become successful in his planning but he fails and dies in spiritual unreadiness and prey to his own plot.

Hamlet was also not aware of God's will and purpose and he does not accept God's creation when he is prevented by His law from committing suicide. But he understands his relationship with divine force when he murders Polonius. This act of murdering Polonius is result of divine prompting. He also thinks that he too will be punished for this act but he takes it as part of his new ministry. Earlier he was alienated from the divine will but now he is in harmony with it and he will dedicate himself for the fulfillment of Providence. In course of events he kills his old school fellows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on ship. He himself appreciates his rashness. He says, "And praised be rashness for it---let us know". He comes back to Denmark with a strong wish that Providence will certainly arrange something to kill Claudius who is like the cancer in the state. Claudius is not satisfied with killing of his own brother and adultery with brother's wife and throne but now he wants to kill Hamlet. He thinks that it not a proper time to take revenge on the basis of spectral evidence. He thinks that he has time to accomplish his purpose because he has time until English Ambassadors return with the news of death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Hamlet comes without much plan to kill Claudius or duel and also without taking any precautions for his safety. Both Hamlet and Laertes are fatally wounded in duel and Queen poisoned due to Claudius's plan. But Laertes confesses about the guilt of Claudius before the court and for Hamlet it is judicial execution of Claudius. Hamlet is fatally punished for his divine ministry but he has not taken personal revenge but he is instrumental in performing the divine will through his firm faith upon Providence. While dying he believes that "readiness is all," and he achieves ability to accept both life and death. His faith in life is affirmed in his attempt to convince Horatio not to commit suicide also his voting for Fortinbras, the new king. On the other hand, Claudius is not ready to for death and has damned himself by involving in evil plots to shape his ends. But Hamlet has most nobly won his salvation.

4.20 Check your progress

A) Complete the following sentences choosing the correct alternative:

- 1) Laertes' foil is that he uses in the dual.
a) decorated b) beautiful c) poisoned d) very small
- 2) understands his relationship with divine force.
a) Horatio b) Hamlet c) Claudius d) Ophelia
- 3) drinks a cup of poison and dies.
a) Hamlet b) Claudius c) The queen d) Ophelia
- 4) has murdered Hamlet's father.
a) The queen b) Ghost c) Claudius d) Osric
- 5) In the end is not ready to die.
a) Hamlet b) Fortinbras c) Claudius d) Prato
- 6) becomes the king of Denmark.
a) Fortinbras b) Horatio c) Claudius d) Hamlet Jr.
- 7) prevents Horatio from committing suicide.
a) Fortonbras b) the queen c) Hamlet d) Polonius

8) Ambassadors return with the news of death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

- a) Danish b) French c) English d) European

4.21 The keys to check your progress

1 – c 2- b 3 – c 4- c

5—c 6 – b 7 ---c 8 – c

4.22 Exercises

1. Comment on *Hamlet* as Shakespearean tragedy.
2. Comment on Hamlet as tragic hero
3. Write a note on Claudius as villain of *Hamlet*.
4. Justify Hamlet's delay in his revenge.
5. Write a note on *Hamlet* as a revenge play .
6. Write Short note on the following .
 1. Horatio
 2. The queen
 3. Laertes
 5. Ophelia
 6. The ghost
 7. Supernatural elements in *Hamlet*
 8. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
 9. Use of prose in *Hamlet*
 10. Hamlet's love for Ophelia

4.23 Activities

1. Try to write comments in your own words after each act is completed I the class.

2. Perform some of the scenes from the play before the students of the department.
3. Watch Hamlet on YouTube performed by different companies.
4. Read Marathi translation of Hamlet.

4.24 Recommended reading:

1. Asand, Haedin L. *Stage Directions in Hamlet: New Essays and New Directions*. N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003
2. Driver, T.F. *Drama and History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967
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4. Hirsh, James. *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*. N.J.: N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2003
5. MacCary, Thomas. *Hamlet: A Guide to the play*. London: Greenwood Press. 1988
6. Priestly, James. *The art of the Dramatist*. London: Heinemann, 1957
7. Worthen, W.B. (ed.) *Anthology of Drama (Fourth Edition)*. London: Cengage Learning EMEA, 2004

4.25 References:

1. Abrahms, Phyllis, *The tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Lancer Books, Inc. USA 1968
2. Campbell, Lily. *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* Methuen and CO LTD, London 1970
3. Ludowyk, E. F C, *Understanding Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press 1964
4. Wilson, John (ed.) *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince Of Denmark*. Cambridge University Press 1971



Module V

Types of Drama

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5.0 Objectives

- To study forms of drama
- To understand drama as a genre of literature.

5.1 Introduction:

Drama is one of the major forms of literature. Aristotle classified the word literature into three types: the dramatic, the narrative and the lyrical. According to the classical thinkers, drama was the greatest form of literature. The dramatists create men and women who speak to each other and from this communication we gather the story of their life. The term drama is derived from the Greek verb *draein* which means- *to do*. In all cultures drama seems to have originated in religious rituals. Early drama depended on mythology and stories from the Holy Bible. The early

religious plays were of two types- a) The Mystery and b) The Miracle. The Mysteries are based on subjects taken from the Holy Bible. The Miracles deal with the lives of saints. The Elizabethan age is the golden age of the English drama. Tragedy, comedy, tragi-comedy, history etc. are some of the sub-genres of drama. The following sub-units attempt to make you understand these kinds of literature.

5.2 Presentation of Subject Matter:

5.2.1 Tragedy:

Tragedy is an important form that began in Greece. The word tragedy derived from the Greek word 'tragoidia' that literally means 'goat song' (*tragos* means 'he goat' and *aeidein* means 'song'). There were three giant pillars of this genre- Aeschylus (525 BC- 450 BC.) Sophocles (496 -406 BC) and Euripides (480- 406 BC). Probably, the roots of tragedy were found in the religious rituals of the Greeks. The early Dorian villagers of Greece used to hold festivals in honour of God, Dionysus. The story, the dialogue, the action, the characters, etc. were the main contributions given to English Drama after the 16th century by the Morality, the Miracle, and the Interlude. Thus, they are true germs or the seeds of the beginning of the English Drama and that they paved the way for flourishing drama.

Aristotle is the best known classical critic. His most famous work is Poetics. The Poetics is considered the most fundamental treatise on elements of tragedy, epic poetry, comedy, theory of imitation etc. There is a comprehensive discussion of tragedy in Poetics. Aristotle defines tragedy thus: Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narration; through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

According to Aristotle, there are six constituents or parts of tragedy. These are: plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle. The plot is the most important of a tragedy. The plot means the arrangements of the incidents. Normally, the plot is divided into five acts and each act is further divided into several scenes. The plot is the soul of a tragedy. The plot may be simple or complex. A simple plot has no complications, surprise or suspense. A good plot is a complex plot. Its complications, sudden turns of events and situations of suspense keep the spectator spell bound. Characters are men and women who act. The hero and the heroine are two important

figures among the characters. There are many types of characters which include: confidante, dynamic, static, protagonist, antagonist, round, flat and stock characters. Thought means what the characters think or feel during their career in the development of the plot. The thought is expressed through their speeches or dialogues. Diction is the medium of language or expression through which the characters reveal their thoughts and feelings. The diction should be embellished with each kind of artistic ornament. The song is one of these embellishments. The spectacle is a theatrical effect presented on the stage. The decoration of the stage is the major part of the spectacle but it also includes scenes of physical torture, loud lamentations, dances, colourful garments of the main characters.

Types of tragedy:

The dramatic type, 'Tragedy' can be classified in two ways. Firstly, it can be divided according to its form or structure and secondly, according to its matter or theme. From the point of view of form or structure, tragedy is divided into two broad classes- a) Classical b) Romantic. The classical tragedy was based on Greek conventions. The Romantic tragedy followed its own rules and paid little respect to authority.

A] Classical Tragedy:

The main features of the classical tragedy are- i) The observance of Three Unities and ii) The use of the Chorus

i) Three Unities:

The theory of the three unities of Time, Action and Place is based on Aristotle's *Poetics*. In Unity of Time, the events presented should not require more than a day to occur. In Unity of Place, the actions occurred in more or less a single place. Aristotle has stressed only one unity, the unity of action. Every event and every incident must be necessary. There is a logical link up of the various events, a sequence of cause and effect binding them together.

ii) Chorus:

The Chorus is the noteworthy element in Greek tragedy. It consisted of a band of singers and dancers. In the beginning, the chorus often takes part in the action. Then, it is a commentator. Afterwards, it is primarily a lyric element. Sometimes it

was a group of characters. Ordinarily, it was reduced to a single speaker. In the classical tragedy the chorus played an important role in the action of the play.

B] The Romantic Tragedy-

The Romantic Tragedy did not follow the set pattern of the classical tragedy. There are some following features of the romantic tragedy.

i) Combination of Idealistic with Realistic:

It is true that romantic tragedy is associated with aristocratic character and deals with high personages but later the tragic hero is often set in a world of commonplace men and things. As compared with Neo-Classical Tragedy, the Romantic Tragedy combines the idealistic with the realistic.

ii) Tragi-comedy:

The romantic playwrights did not accept the strict division between tragedy and comedy, unlike the classical playwrights. They freely used tragic and comic scenes in the same play.

iii) Attitudes towards the Unities:

The romantic playwrights ignored the first two i.e. Unity of time and place. For example, the dramatists like William Shakespeare cared nothing for the unities of time and place. He moved his scenes freely from town to town and from country to country. He described the events of many years in one play.

iv) The Drama of Action:

The Romantic Tragedy is a drama of action. Nearly everything happens in it on the stage. Duels are fought, murders and suicides committed. The action was played on the stage and not off the stage.

Thus, the Romantic Tragedy makes free use of a variety of themes and tone often mixing tragic and comic scenes in the same play. It also violates three unities.

The tragic drama or the tragedy can be studied according to its content or theme or subject matter. The following are some types of tragedy.

A] Horror Tragedy-

It was developed in the early part of the 17th century by John Webster and Ford. The horror is shown by means of incidents on the stage. The aim of the horror

tragedy is stage sensationalism. *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Vittoria Corombona* and *the Broken Heart* are the greatest horror tragedies. In these plays, the stress is not given on the inner struggle of the characters. But the incidents and situations which arouse the feelings of thrill of awe are important.

B] The Heroic Tragedy-

It was written during the later half of the 17th century. The heroic tragedy follows the laws of the epic or heroic poem rather than to those of the tragedy. John Dryden and Thomas Otway were the chief practitioners of Heroic tragedy. In the heroic tragedies, a hero is of superman prowess and with superhuman ideals. There is an inner conflict in the minds of the several of the characters between love and honour. It is filled with intense dramatic interest.

C] Domestic Tragedy-

The term 'Domestic Tragedy' is applied to some plays written in the 18th century. In it, the main characters are drawn from lower or middle classes. Its actions are concerned with personal and domestic matters. George Lillo's *The London Merchant*, Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena* are some examples of domestic tragedy. It is a serious play and realistic in style.

D] Sentimental Tragedy-

The sentimental tragedy is the reaction against the heroic tragedy of the 18th century. It is also called the 'She-tragedy' because the central figure is a woman in it. It is sentimental because there is excessive indulgence in emotion. Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore* are examples of sentimental tragedy.

5.2.2 Comedy:

Comedy as a kind or form of Drama has been very popular on the stage. Laughter and a happy ending are two elements of comedy. In the West, comedy began with the Greeks. Aristotle himself talks about two words from which the word comedy might have been derived. He says that Dorians used the word '*Comae*' to describe the outlying hamlets (a group of small dwellings in a rural district) or the word '*Comae*' meaning reveals or festive celebrations. Aristotle has noted that the ancient comedians had to seek appreciation and applause from rural people and perhaps they were forbidden to enter the city. Comedy is a celebration; it celebrates the spirit of festivity.

Types of Comedy-

Like tragedy, comedy can also be divided on the basis of form and content. From the point of view form or structure the comedy can be divided into two broad classes- a) the classical b) the romantic

A] Classical Comedy-

The classical comedy follows the rules of dramatic composition as laid down by the ancient Greek and Roman masters. Its models are the classical dramatists like Platus, Terence and Aristophanes. The most important of these rules are:

- 1) The observance of three unities of time, place and action.
- 2) The strict separation of the comic and the tragic or the light and serious elements.
- 3) Realism deals with the everyday familiar life of ordinary people and as its aim are corrective and satiric.

B] Romantic Comedy-

The romantic comedy flourished in the Elizabethan age. William Shakespeare and the 'University Wits' i.e. John Lyly, Graham Greene and Thomas Nashe are the prominent writers of romantic comedy. The romantic comedy grew out of national tastes and traditions. The dramatists do not care for any rules of literary creation. He writes according to his fancy. He does not follow three unities.

Divisions of Comedy on the basis of Content-

The divisions of comedy according to theme are numerous. They can be illustrated as follows.

A] The Comedy of Humours-

Comedies of humours were chiefly by Ben Jonson. The comedy of humours paints the individual (person) having one marked characteristic. The word 'humour' in Ben Jonson's age stood for some characteristic whim or quality of society. Such a trait in human character, which is abnormal, is called humour. According to Physiology of the Middle Ages, each individual was composed of four humours or fluids i.e. of blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. The proper mixture of three fluids contributed to the balance and normal health of the individual personality. The perfect balance of the humours meant the ideal temperament in the man. Thomas

Shadwell had a flair and skill in depicting humourous types. This is also called the 'satiric comedy' or the 'corrective comedy'. It tends to see the dark side of humanity and uses laughter as a satiric weapon. Jonson's *Volpone* is an example of this comedy.

B] The Comedy of Manners-

The comedy of manners flourished in the Restoration Era (1660-1700). It reflected the culture of the upper classes in which manners are supreme. It is called the comedy of manners because it truly reflected the courtly life, explored the foibles and follies of refined gentlemen and women, for example, A Whore is called a 'mistress'. The amorous old women were the stock characters in the comedy of manners. E.g. William Congreve's *The Way of the World* all the old female characters are lustful and gross. Congreve has painted the social codes, conducts of people of the Restoration London in it. He has especially dealt with upper class aristocratic life. At the same time, he teaches "moral lessons".

C] The Sentimental Comedy-

The sentimental comedy of the 18th century was a reaction against the comedy of manners. Humour which is the life of comedy was completely driven out from the sentimental comedy. Its place of humour was taken by pathos. It described the distresses of the middle class characters in order to evoke the sympathy of the audience. The principal writers of this type of comedy were Richard Steele, Hugh Kelly, and Richard Cumberland eg. Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.

D] The Genteel Comedy-

The Genteel Comedy was developed by Colley Cibber in the middle of the 18th century. Primarily it ridiculed the affectations of 18th century society. It satirised their use of wigs, the shoes, the ribbons, the toilet etc. The genteel comedy paints a more artificial life than the comedy of manners. Affectations ruled the life of the upper class society and these affectations are reproduced in the pages of the genteel comedy Colley Cibber's *T*

he Careless Husband has been described as the first genteel comedy on the stage.

E] The Comedy of Intrigue-

The 18th century comedy gave birth to one more type of comedy called the Restoration comedy of Intrigue. It painted the infidelity in love and marriage. John

Fletcher, Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Centilivre were the practitioners of the intrigue comedy. In this type of the comedy laughter arises out of the disguises and the intrigues and the complications of the plot.

F] Commedia dell Arte-

Commedia dell Arte was a form of comic drama developed around the mid-sixteenth century by guilds of professional Italian actors. Playing stock characters, the actors largely improvised the dialogue around a given scenario. Commedia performers relied on stereotypes and familiar situations to invent dialogue and action. The plot is enlivened by the buffoonery of 'Punch' and other clowns. Wandering Italian troupes played in all the large cities of Renaissance Europe and influenced various writers of comedies.

G] Festive comedies-

They emphasized celebration; the victory symbolized the process of renewal and regeneration which allows life to continue. William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is a perfect example of love found, lost and regained and the traditional wedding at the end of comedy represents the continuance of life itself. This was also categorized as Romantic comedy. *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare are examples of romantic comedy as they represent a love affair which goes topsy-turvy due to problems or disguises but ends in a happy union.

5.2.3 Melodrama:

Melodrama is a minor dramatic type. It is a debased form of tragedy. Melodramas are sensational plays with highly charged emotional appeal. It was a popular form of entertainment in the 19th century in Europe and the United States.

Etymologically, the word melodrama means 'song'. Now, the term melodrama means a play of a crudely sensational type, relying for its effect on physical action, purely theatrical language and behaviour and naive sentiment. Originally, the term melodrama is taken from French word 'Melodrame' meaning a play, a part of play, or a poem that had a musical background to support the spoken text. In Italian, melodrama is a synonym for opera. Rousseau's *Pygmalion* (1770) is regarded as the successful beginning of the melodrama.

The characters in melodrama are mere puppets in an extravagant story of crime, revenge, the evils of drink or gambling, lost wills, missing heirs and so forth. In it,

villainy is foiled and virtue is triumphant of the end, melodrama was chiefly notable for their wonderful scenic devices in the representation of railway accidents, shipwrecks, fires, floods, earthquakes and other calamities. Eg. *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster.

5.2.4 Farce:

Farce is a minor dramatic form and low kind of comedy. The term 'Farce' has Latin origin. It is derived from Latin verb 'farcire' meaning 'stuff'. A farce is stuffed with absurd characters and incidents. The term 'farce' was used in the 13th century to indicate interpolations made by the clergy into the litany i.e. a solemn public prayer. The germs of farce are found in Greek and Roman comedies in the works of Aristophanes and Plautus of the 15th century. An example from this period and still one of the best is *La Farce de Maitre Pierre* by an unknown French writer. In England, the plays of this kind took the form of a short piece called an 'Interlude'. The main purpose of 'Farce' is to provoke laughter. It does not observe life realistically. It does not attempt any serious criticism of life. It ridicules man's faults and weaknesses. It has minimal literary value. A farce is a lively caricature. It is not a representation of things as they are. It belongs to the realm of nonsense in which the characters are free from everyday care and restraints. The themes of the farce are deception and impersonations. They are about feelings from angry wives, husbands, creditors etc. eg. William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night Dream*, Charles Hawtrey's *The Private Secretary*, and G. B. Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

5.2.5 Tragi-Comedy:

Tragi-Comedy is also called Dramatic Romance. The Greek classical writers did not favour this form of the drama. Aristotle condemned such a mixture because he felt that such mixture spoils and weakens the tragic effect. A dramatic type 'Tragi-comedy' was unknown to the Greeks. One can find a germ of tragi-comedy in the play '*Amphitruo*' by Plautus, the Latin comic dramatist. He called his play a 'tragic-comedia'. In English, the tragi-comedy arose in the reign of James I under Italian and Spanish influences. *A King and No King* by Beaumont Fletcher is the first English tragi-comedy. William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* are the masterpieces of tragi-comedy.

The plot of tragi-comedy is a tale of mingled weal and woe. It often verges on the improbable. The characters undergo transformation, sometimes natural,

sometimes rather forced before the play closes. The dramatist makes free use of supernatural and pastoral elements to serve the purpose. A tragi-comedy is a play, the action of which, though apparently tends towards tragedy, ends happily. It is a complete tragedy up to a certain point and a complete comedy thereafter. It means in the rising action, it is tragedy and in the falling action, it is comedy. The climax separates the one from the other.

5.2.6 The Masque:

The masque is a kind of dramatic entertainment. It was of Italian origin. In England, it was popular in the age of William Shakespeare. This kind of dramatic entertainment was called a Masque or a Masquerade because the actors wore masks or wizards on their faces. Oxford Dictionary defines, “Masque is an amateur historic or musical entertainment with metrical dialogue.” In the Modern Era the masque has developed into something like splendid modern ballet, with additional attractions of beautiful speeches and songs.

The Masque was a costly form of entertainment. It was designed either for presentation at court or to grace a festive occasion at a noble man’s house. Often, it was performed as part of the celebrations at a wedding in a great family. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* contains two masks. In the masque, the use of allegorical and mythical subjects is made. The characters are deities of classical mythology, nymphs and personified abstractions like love, delight, harmony etc. The number of characters is restricted to six. The scenes are laid in ideal regions, at least in some far off region picturesque and romantic, such as Olympus, Arcadia, and the Fortunate Isles. The entertainment is much shorter than the regular drama. The patronage of James I and his court helped to popularize it in England. But on the King’s death in 1625, it fell on evil days and its production restricted its use in drama.

5.2.7 History plays-

History as we know it today was a very late development in the domain of human knowledge. It began as a record of events presented in order of time and by events that influence man’s life in this world. These records were called Chronicles. It was a regular practice to up-date them. The most reputed and influential chronicle was that of Raphael Holinshed (died 1580), the Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (1577) which was the source of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists.

The materials in the chronicles were used by dramatists to highlight the major events in the lives of heroes of the past. The pattern was predominantly episodic, that is, events arranged in a time sequence. It was, however, Christopher Marlowe in his *Edward II*, who gave a certain shape to historical material. Later Shakespeare wrote a series of plays that dramatized England's history. His cycle of history plays begins with King John (1199-1214) and ends with Henry VIII (1509-1547), the father of Queen Elizabeth.

The writing of a history play is rather difficult. It has to be history as well as drama. Therefore, a dramatist who chooses historical events as his subject matter has to do a lot of tightrope walking. Otherwise he loses his balance. History represents a record of the past. Its interpretations might change, but the events as such are not subject to change. In a history play, a dramatist has really speaking no choice as far as public events are concerned. Such public events do have social, political or even cultural orientations and their significance may be perceived differently. Now interpretations may give us a better understanding of their historical meaning. This is what historians in fact do when they read the events of the past and try to relate them to the forces of the present. But a writer, like the historian, cannot take liberties with recorded events as such. The sphere of public events is there for everyone to see. But it is equally true that the public events are not as impersonal and general as we tend to regard them. These are the consequences of the decisions taken by men and women of the past.

5.2.8 Satire:

The dictionary tells us that satire is a way of criticising a person, an idea or an institution in which humour is used to show their faults or weaknesses. The word is derived from Latin *satura* or *satira* meaning medley or a mix. When applied to writing it was primarily associated with verse of some length that attacked individuals, institutions, social groups or classes or ideas. The main intention or function of such an exercise was to expose faults, vices, evil tendencies and limitations. It uses a wide range of language and devices in order to ridicule the subject chosen. More often than not it generates an attitude of amusement. But we must also note that satire, barring a few significant examples, rarely stands on its own. Therefore, critics have argued that satire is a mode rather than a full-fledged literary form. Contempt, scorn, indignation are some of the feelings satire successfully communicates. It aims at deriding individual behaviour, institutional

administration, social evils and more importantly political power. Mockery, derision, caricature, criticism, invective, irony, humour, wit and perception of disparity and incongruity between ideas and practice (that is, “what one says” and “what one does”) contribute to the strength of satirical writings.

The simplest and the most common example that everyone is familiar with is that of the cartoon in a newspaper. The cartoonist exaggerates the distinctive features of famous personalities in a few bold lines. We immediately recognise the public figure but see him in a new light, a reduction that at once amuses and makes us laugh. It is an oblique way of looking at a person that usually does not hurt.

Satire is regarded as a highly sophisticated and formal form of literature. In primitive societies and tribal cultures verses were used to ridicule and abuse the enemy. Such utterances were fairly common in ancient Greek rituals associated with magic. Out of these ritual practices developed a number of literary forms that aimed at moral instruction. Laughter, ridicule, mockery or direct criticism had a corrective function because they ruthlessly exposed human folly. Satire, therefore, continued to be a dominant element even in early Greek comedy, especially that of Aristophanes. Perhaps it is necessary for us to remember that the “comic” and the “satiric” are not the same. We may not be able to distinguish the two as precisely and clearly as we desire. The “comic” provokes laughter for its own sake, for sheer enjoyment. The “satiric” does generate laughter, but is used as a powerful weapon to correct, to reform and to make people aware of their follies and limitations. We are not saying that satire does actually bring about a change. At best it is doubtful whether art, of whatever kind it be, can influence people in a direct way and prompt them to act in a certain direction.

5.2.9 Drama of Ideas or Problem Plays or Propaganda Plays:

The term “Problem Play”, that designates a subgenre, refers to a drama which explicitly deals with contemporary social problems. The form was popularized by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. The chief exponents of this realistic drama of ideas were Henrik Ibsen, G.B.Shaw, John Galsworthy and Granville Barker. The situation faced by the protagonist is put forward by the author as a representative instance of a contemporary social problem, in problem plays. The issue may be the drastically inadequate autonomy, scope, and dignity allotted to women in the middle-class nineteenth-century family (Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, 1879); or the

morality of prostitution, regarded as a typical product of the economic arrangements in a capitalist society (George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 1898).

Drama of Ideas or Problem plays can also be compared with 'Social Conditions of England Novels' or 'Industrial Novels' simply for raising and projecting the issues that were deeply affecting the society. George Bernard Shaw pioneered Drama of Ideas which is a type of discussion play. The most acute problems of social and personal morality are the clash of ideas and hostile ideologies. There is a little action but discussion in a Drama of Ideas. Only the vehicles of ideas are characters. The conflict is the essence of drama which is reached through the opposing ideas of different characters. To educate people through entertainment is an important aim of Drama of Ideas. An excellent example of the Drama of Ideas is *Arms and the Man*. Here very little happens except discussion. The plot is built up with dynamic and unconventional ideas regarding war and love. Shaw criticizes the romantic notion of war and love prevailing in contemporary society. By extension, the term came to be applied also to other Shakespearean plays which explore the dark side of human nature, or which seem to leave unresolved the issues that arise in the course of the action.

5.2.10 One Act Play:

A One-act-play is an important branch of literature and the most popular form of dramatic representation. A One-act play has only one act. Percival Wilde, in his book 'The Craftsmanship of the One-Act-Play' has provided a considerable definition of one-act-play. He says, "A One-Act-Play is an orderly representation of life, arousing emotions in the audience. It is characterised by superior unity and economy; it is playable in comparatively short space of time, and it is intended to be assimilated as a whole."

One-act plays may consist of one or more scenes. In recent years, the 10-minute play has emerged as a popular subgenre of the one-act play, especially in writing competitions. The origin of the one-act play may be traced to the very beginning of drama: in ancient Greece, *Cyclops*, a satyr play by Euripides, is an early example. One-act plays by major dramatists are as follows-

Edward Albee -- *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2002)

Samuel Beckett – *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958)

Anton Chekhov – *A Marriage Proposal* (1890)

5.2.11 Closet drama:

A closet drama is read by a solitary reader and not supposed to be performed on stage. The division between private ‘closet’ drama which is designed for reading and public ‘stage’ drama is designed for performance in a commercial theatre setting dates from the late 18th century. The practice of circulating plays in written form may be printed or handwritten for literary audiences. Although non-performative in nature, the literary historian Henry A. Beers considers closet drama “a quite legitimate product of literary art.”

Closet dramas are traditionally defined in narrower terms as belonging to a genre of dramatic writing unconcerned with stage technique and seldom produced for the stage. “Sometimes the term carries a negative connotation, that such works either lack sufficient theatrical qualities or require theatrical effects beyond the capacity of most (if not all) theatres, closet dramas through the ages have had a variety of dramatic features and purposes not tied to successful stage performance.” Stage ability is only one aspect of closet drama. Many times, some playwrights might choose the genre of ‘closet’ drama to avoid censorship of their works like political tragedies. (Wikipedia)

The drama of Hroswitha of Gandersheim and debate poems in quasi-dramatic form (*The Debate of Body and Soul*) are some of the closet drama of the Middle Ages.

5.2.12 Dark Comedy or Black Comedy:

Black comedy is also known as Dark comedy of a comic style that is generally considered serious or taboo. There is a controversy regarding the term Black comedy due to its subject matter. The term black humour was coined by the surrealist theorist Andre Breton in 1935 to label a subgenre of comedy and satire in which laughter arises from cynicism and scepticism, often relying on topics such as death. For his book *Anthology of Black Humour* Breton coined the term Black Comedy. According to Breton Jonathan Swift is the originator of black humour. Breton included many examples with which the audience empathizes, as is more typical in the tradition of gallows humour, and examples in which the comedy is used to mock the victim.

Bruce Jay Friedman, in his anthology entitled *Black Humour*, imported the concept of black comedy to the United States. He labelled many different authors and works with the idea, arguing that they shared the same literary genre. Early American writers who employed black humour were Nathanael West and Vladimir Nabokov. In 1965 a mass-market paperback titled *Black Humour*, was released. It contained work by a myriad of authors, like Edward Albee, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth and others. This was one of the first American anthologies devoted to the conception of black humour as a literary genre; the publication also sparked nationwide interest in black humour. Among the writers labelled as black humorists by journalists and literary critics are Roald Dahl, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, and Philip Roth. All these writers have written novels, poems, stories, plays, and songs in which profound or horrific events were portrayed in a comic manner.

The purpose of black comedy is to explore vulgar issues; some comedians use it as a tool. The major themes of the genre include: Violence (murder, abuse, domestic violence, rape, torture, war, genocide, terrorism, corruption); Discrimination (chauvinism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia); Disease (anxiety, depression, suicide, nightmares, drug abuse, mutilation, disability, terminal illness, insanity); Sexuality (sodomy, homosexuality, incest, infidelity, fornication, religion and barbarism).

5.2.13 Expressionist Drama:

Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller were the most famous playwrights of the Expressionist movement in the early 20th century. Reinhard Sorge, Walter Hasenclever, Hans Henny Jahnn, and Arnolt Bronnen are some of the practitioners of Expressionist Drama. Swedish playwright August Strindberg and German actor and dramatist Frank Wedekind are regarded as the precursors of dramaturgical experiments.

The play *Murderer, the Hope of Women* by Oskar Kokoschka was the first fully Expressionist work. When there is a struggle for dominance between an unnamed man and woman, the Man brands the woman and she stabs and imprisons him. But he frees himself and she falls dead at his touch. At the end of the play, the man slaughters all around him “like mosquitoes.” The characters extreme simplification of mythic types, choral effects, declamatory dialogue and heightened intensity would

become characteristic of later Expressionist plays. The first full-length Expressionist play was *The Son* by Walter Hasenclever, which was published in 1914 and first performed in 1916. The term Expressionism was very much popular in American Literature. Among the expressionists, Eugene O'Neill (*The Hairy Ape*, *The Emperor Jones* and *The Great God Brown*), Sophie Treadwell (*Machinal*), Lajos Egri (*Rapid Transit*) and Elmer Rice (*The Adding Machine*) used expressionistic technique in their plays. Martin Esslin notices the decline in the mere representation of superficial reality as it could never convey the whole truth. According to Esslin this type of Expressionist drama becomes “a theatre of cries, a theatre of ecstasy, or at least frenzied intensity” (535).

5.2.14 Poetic Drama in English literature:

The theory of Poetic Drama is propounded by T. S. Eliot. Poetic drama or Verse drama is any drama written in verse significantly. Poetic drama was the dominant form in Europe for a very long period. Most Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was in verse drama. It is the combination of ancient and modern techniques which is symbolic and difficult.

It is an artistic reason to write tragedies in verse form that verse lines are easier for the actors to memorize exactly. Poetry is regarded as an integral part of the play, interweaved with plot, character and their interplay. Simultaneously, the dramatic elements must be capable of sustaining the poetic grace and intensity. Poetic drama is a combination of ritual, imagery, and music. *The Murder in the Cathedral* is an important play in verse form. Auden, Isherwood, Christopher Frye used the poetic drama in their plays.

5.3 Glossary:

Conflict: the central struggle that moves the plot forward. The conflict can be the protagonist’s struggle against fate, nature, society, or another person

Climax: action comes to its highest point of conflict

Monologue: long speech by one person in conversation, dramatic composition for one performer

Setting: tells the readers where and when the story takes place.

Fiction: imaginary characters and events. Fiction can be entirely imaginary or based on real events and people.

Symbol: something that has a literal meaning but also stands for or represents an abstract ideas.

Theme: main idea of the story. The message the writer intends to communicate by telling the story.

Point of view: the position of the narrator of the story and what the writer sees from that point.

Intrigues: secret plans to harm or cheat someone

Cynic: a person who believes that people's motives are always selfish

Deception: the act of deceiving/ a thing that deceives

Amuse: cause to laugh/ make time pass pleasantly

Decorum: polite and socially acceptable behaviour

Reconciliation: the process of making two or more ideas agree with each other when they actually seem to be in opposition

Ingredients: things or qualities of which something is made

Episode: an event or a situation occurring as part of a long series of events

Ode: a poem addressed to a thing or person, or celebrating some special event

Liturgical: about a fixed form of public worship used in churches Mysteries and

Miracle plays: a medieval drama based on events in the Bible or the lives of Christian saints.

Interlude: a piece performed during an interval separating the parts of a play

Incorporate: to include

Embellish: decorate

Delineation: the process of showing something by describing it in detail

Illuminate: to make something clear, explain

Predicament: difficult or uneasy situation

Infallible: perfect

Grandeur: the quality of being great, impressive

Pertinent: relevant to something

Flaw: a fault

Emulate: follow, imitate

5.4 Check your Progress:

A) Complete the following sentences choosing the most correct alternative:

1. Theis the soul of a tragedy.
a. plot b. setting c. character d. climax
2. *The Broken Heart* is an example oftragedy.
a. romantic b. horror c. heroic d. domestic
3. The romantic comedy was flourished in theage.
a. Classical b. Modern c. Elizabethan d. Neo-classical
4. are 'University Wits'.
a. Shakespeare and Shaw b. Plato and Aristotle
c. Greene and Aristophanes d. Greene and Lyly
5. Melodramas areplays with highly charged emotional appeal.
a. traditional b. sensational c. economic d. satirical
6. Rousseau's is regarded as the successful beginning of the melodrama.
a. Poetics b. The Republic
c. Pygmalion d. The Theory of Drama
7. In aplay, a dramatist has really speaking no choice as far as public events are concerned.
a. history b. problem c. one-act-play d. expressionist
8. The word is derived from*satura*.
a. Italian b. Greek c. American d. Latin
9. The form was popularized by the Norwegian playwright.....
a. Rousseau b. Henrik Ibsen c. Frye d. George Brown
10. According to Breton,is the originator of black humour.
a. Bruce Jay Friedman b. Jonathan Swift
c. Henrik Ibsen d. George Bernard Shaw

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence each:

1. What is the main purpose of Farce?
2. What are the themes of Farce?
3. What is a litany?
4. What did the characters/ actors wear on their faces in the masquerade?
5. Who patronized masque to become popular in England?
6. Name the early American writers who employed black humour.
7. What is the purpose of black comedy?
8. Which was the first fully Expressionist work?
9. Who propounded the theory of Poetic Drama?
10. When was the comedy of manners flourished?

5.5 Exercise:

1. Answer the following in about 200-250 words each:

- i) What are features of romantic tragedy?
- ii) Write a detailed note on the constituents of tragedy.
- iii) Explain the various types of tragedy according to content.
- iv) Write a note on types of comedy according to structure.
- v) Explain the expressionist play.

2. Write short notes on following in about 100-150 words each:

- i) History of tragedy
- ii) The Masque
- iii) The Melodrama
- iv) Drama of Ideas
- v) Satire

5.6 Answer to Check your Progress:

- A]**
- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. a. plot | 2. b. horror |
| 3. c. Elizabethan | 4. d. Greene and Lyly |
| 5. b. sensational | 6. c. Pygmalion |

7. b. problem

8. d. Latin

9. b. Henrik Ibsen

10. b. Jonathan Swift

- B]**
1. to provoke laughter.
 2. deception and impersonations
 3. solemn public prayer
 4. characters /actors wore masks or wizards on their faces.
 5. James I
 6. Nathanael West and Vladimir Nabokov.
 7. to explore vulgar issues; some comedians use it as a tool.
 8. August Strindberg and Frank Wedekind
 9. T. S. Eliot
 10. in the Restoration era

5.7 Further Reading:

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Module VI

Comedy as a Form

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- 6.0 Objectives
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6.0 Objectives

- To learn the history of comedy
- To understand the definition and constituents of comedy
- To know the different types of comedy
- To get acquainted with the contribution of major dramatists writing comedy plays.

6.1 Introduction: -

Drama is one of the major forms of literature. Aristotle classified poetry into three kinds; the dramatic, the narrative and the lyrical. According to him, the dramatic form of art was the greatest form of literature. The term drama is derived from the Greek verb 'dran' which means 'to act', to do, and to perform. Drama is regarded as the mother of all arts. Drama is in the first person. It is not only useful for reading but audible and visible (audio-visual) which helps you for better understanding. It is a direct-speech. It is in a dialogue form. That's why; it is effective more than Novel and Poetry.

Drama is used to inform, educate and entertain the people. The form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. It is difficult to separate drama from performance because during the stage performance of a play, drama brings life experiences realistically to audience. Drama is an imitation of life. It is different from other forms of literature because its unique characteristics. The drama has mirrored the life, customs, manners and general living habits of the people. It has a message to communicate to the audience. It uses actors to convey this message. The main purpose behind the drama is to teach the moral values. Drama is a composite art. To define any form of literature is very difficult. According to Webster's English Dictionary "The drama is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance."

Comedy is one of the oldest forms of drama. Comedy highlights that human beings are in fact ridiculous and cannot change. The words comedy and comic are used for anything that is funny or laughable. Comedy means a play, which has pleasant atmosphere and a happy ending. The origin of comedy belongs to festival. The term 'Comedy' is customarily applied only to the plays for the stage or the motion pictures.

6.2 Presentation of subject matter:

6.2.1 History of Comedy

Aristotle, (384-322 BC) the Father of Western Criticism, in his work 'Poetics' (short treatise) stated that comedy originated in *phallic* processions and the light treatment of the otherwise base and ugly. He also added that the origins of comedy are obscure because it is not treated seriously from its inception. Aristotle taught that comedy is generally a positive for society, since it brings from happiness. He divided comedy into three categories/ subgenres - Farce, Romantic Comedy and Satire.

Plato, the disciple of Aristotle, also says comedy should be tightly controlled if one wants to achieve the ideal state. Aristotle defined comedy as one of the original four genres of literature. The other three genres are tragedy, epic poetry and lyrical poetry.

Literature, in general is defined by Aristotle as a Mimesis, or imitation of life. Comedy is the third form of literature, being the most divorced from a true mimesis. Comedy begins with low or base characters seeking insignificant aims, and end with some accomplishment of the aims which either lightens the initial baseness or reveals the insignificance of the aims.

Astophanes (425 BC), comic playwright and satirical author of the ancient Greek theatre, wrote 40 comedies. He developed his type of comedy from the earlier satyr plays. Among the satyr plays the only surviving examples are by Euripides which are much late examples and not representative of the genre. In ancient Greece, comedy originated in bawdy and ribald songs or recitations apropos of phallic processions and fertility festivals of gatherings.

The first true domestic comedy was *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1562) by John Still, but the comedy with a regular plot, divided into acts and scenes is *Ralph Roister Doister*(1552) produced by Nicholas Udall. Like tragedy, comedy may also be either classical or romantic in form and design. The comedies which observe the classical rules are called classical comedies and those which ignore the classical rules are called romantic. The classical form was adopted by Ben Jonson and the Restoration Playwrights; and the Romantic Form by William Shakespeare and the University wits dramatists.

6.2.2 Comedy as a genre:

Comedy as a genre of fiction consisting of discourses or works intended to be humorous or amusing by inducing laughter, especially in theatre, film, stand-up comedy, television, radio, books or any other entertainment medium. The term originated in Ancient Greece, in Athenian democracy, the public opinion of voters was influenced by political satire performed by comic poets in theaters. The theatrical genre of Greek comedy can be described as a dramatic performance pitting two groups, age, genders or societies against each other in an amusing agon or conflict. Northrop Frye depicted these two opposing sides as a "Society of Youth" and a "Society of the Old". A revised view characterizes the essential agon of comedy as a struggle between a relatively powerless youth and the societal conventions posing obstacles to his hopes. In this struggle, the youth then becomes constrained by his lack of social authority and is left with little choice but to resort to ruses which engender dramatic irony, which provokes laughter.

Social and political satirical comedies are used to portray persons or social institutions as ridiculous or corrupt, thus alienating their audience from the object of their humor. Parody subverts popular genres and forms, critiquing those forms without necessarily condemning them. Other forms of comedy include Screwball comedy, a subgenre of the romantic comedy, which derives its humor largely from bizarre, surprising (and improbable) situations or characters, and black comedy, which is characterized by a form of humor that includes darker aspects of human behavior or human nature. Similarly, scatological humor, sexual humor and race humor create comedy by violating social conventions or taboos in comic ways. The Comedy of Manners typically takes as its subject a particular part of society (usually upper-class society) and uses humor or parody or satire the behavior and mannerisms of its members. Romantic comedy is a popular genre that depicts burgeoning romance in humorous terms and focuses on the foibles of those who are falling in love.

Shakespearean / Elizabethan Comedy:

'Comedy' in its Elizabethan usage, had a very different meaning from modern comedy. A Shakespearean comedy is one that has a happy ending, usually involving marriages between the unmarried characters, and a true and style that is more light-hearted than Shakespeare's other plays.

The Punch and Judy show has roots in the 16th century Italian Commedia dell'arte. The figure of Punch derives from the Neapolitan stock character of Pulcinella. The figure who later became Mr. Punch made his first recorded appearance in England in 1662. Punch and Judy are performed in the spirit of outrageous comedy - often provoking shocked laughter and are dominated by the anarchic clowning of Mr. Punch appearing at a significant period in British history.

In early 19th century England, pantomime acquired its present form which includes slapstick comedy and featured the first mainstream clown, Joseph Grimaldi, while comedy routines also featured heavily in British music hall theatre which became popular in the 1850s. British comedians who honed their skills in music hall sketches include Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel and Dan Leno. English Music Hall comedian and theatre impresario Fred Karno developed a form of sketch comedy without dialogue in 1890s and Chaplin and Laurel were among the comedians who worked for his company. Surreal humour (also known as absurdist humour) or 'surreal comedy' is a form of humor predicated on deliberate violations or casual reasoning, producing events and behaviours that are obviously illogical. In the 20th century, several avant-garde movements, including the Dadaists, surrealists and futurists, began to argue for an art that was random, jarring and illogical.

6.2.3 Definition of Comedy

Comedy is generally defined as a literary work that is written to amuse or entertain a reader in a comedy, characters can certainly suffer misfortune, but they are typically comedic situations with positive outcomes. Not all examples of comedy as a literary device are funny.

The theme of the comedy is to get victory over the unpleasant circumstances and it results happy conclusion. However, the purpose of the comedy is to entertain the audience. Based on the context and the source of humor, comedy is categorized into three types such as farce, burlesque and satire.

What is comedy?

Comedy is any work that is intended to incite laughter and amusement, especially in theatre, television, film, stand-up comedy or any other entertainment medium. It dates back to the Ancient Greeks, originating from the comedy literary definition which refers to a medieval story or narrative involving an amusing

character that triumphs over poor circumstances, creating comic effects. The tone here is light and satirical and the story always ends well.

Regarding the motion picture industry, the comedy genre definition is one that includes film or shows that make people laugh and have positive endings. Ultimately, comedy makes people laugh, but what is it about comedy that does that? Even though humor is subjective, there are a few things that comedy needs to succeed.

Aristotle, in his poetics, states that comedy originated in phallic songs and that, like tragedy, it began in improvisation ... The distinction is basic to the Aristotelian differentiation between tragedy and comedy: tragedy imitates men who are better than the average and comedy men who are worse.

Aristotle finds that tragedy deals with serious important and virtuous people. Comedy, on the other hand, treats of less virtuous people and focuses on human 'weaknesses and foibles'.

In 'Poetics', he wrote that drama (specifically tragedy) has to include 6 elements; plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle.

Definition:

“Comedy is a drama in which the characters are placed in more or less humorous situation, the movement is light and often mirthful and the play ends in general good will and happiness.” - W. T. Young

6.2.4 Types of Comedy:

English comedy can be classified into the following types namely –

- 1) Romantic Comedy, 2) Comedy of Manners, 3) Satiric Comedy,
- 4) Farce, 5) Comedy of Humours, 6) Sentimental Comedy,
- 7) Tragic-Comedy or Dark Comedy.

▪ **Romantic Comedy**

The term ‘Romantic Comedy’ is a somewhat vague appellation, which denotes a form of drama in which love is the main theme and love leads to happy ending. Perhaps the most popular of all comic forms--both on stage and on screen--is the romantic comedy. The term romantic comedy is somewhat vague appellation, which

denotes a form of drama in which love is the main theme and love leads to a happy ending. Romantic comedy was developed by William Shakespeare on the model of contemporary prose romances such as Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599). Such comedy represents a love affair that involves a beautiful and engaging heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, yet overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. These plays are generally concerned with love affairs that involve a beautiful and idealized heroine; the course of this love does not run smooth, but ultimately overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. In this genre, the primary distinguishing feature is a love plot in which two sympathetic and well-matched lovers are united or reconciled. In a typical romantic comedy, the two lovers tend to be young, likeable and apparently meant for each other, yet they are kept apart by some complicating circumstance (e.g. class differences, parental interference; a previous girlfriend or boyfriend) until, surmounting all obstacles they are finally wedded. A wedding-bells, fairy-tale-style happy ending is practically mandatory. Examples: *Much Ado about Nothing*, Walt Disney's *Cinderella*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Sleepless in Seattle*.

▪ **Comedy of Manners:**

The phrase 'Comedy of Manners' is particularly applied in English to the plays of the Restoration dramatists, and especially to Congreve and Wycherley, but is a type of comedy which can flourish in any civilized urban society and we see it again in Sheridan and Oscar Wilde. The English comedy of manners was early exemplified by William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, and was given a high polish in Restoration comedy (1660-1700). The Restoration form owes much to the brilliant dramas of the French writer Moliere, 1622-73. It deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in a sophisticated upper-class society, and relies for comic effect in large part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogue-often in the form of repartee, a witty conversational give-and-take which constitutes a kind of verbal fencing match -and to a lesser degree, on the violations on social conventions and decorum by would-be wits, jealous husbands, conniving rivals, and foppish dandies. This form deals with the relations and intrigues of gentlemen and ladies living in a sophisticated society. It relies upon comic effect in great part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogues, and to a certain degree, on the ridiculous violations of social conventions and decorum by stupid characters such as

would be wives, jealous husbands, foppish dandies. Excellent examples are William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. The main thrust in the 'comedy of Manners' is to be made fun not so much of individual human being as of social groups and their fashionable manner.

- **Satirical Comedy:**

Satirical Comedy ridicules political or philosophical doctrines, or else attacks deviations from the social order by making ridiculous the violators of its standards of morals or manners. The early master of satiric comedy was the Greek Aristophanes, (c.450-c.-385 B.C.), whose plays mocked political, philosophical and literary matters of his age. The subject of satire is human vice and folly. Its characters include con-artists, criminals, tricksters, deceivers, wheeler-dealers, two-timers, hypocrites, and fortune-seekers and the gullible dupes, knaves, goofs, and cuckolds who serve as their all-too-willing victims. Satirical comedies resemble other types of comedy in that they trace the rising fortune of a central character. However, in this case, the central character (like virtually everybody else in the play or story) is likely to be cynical, foolish, or morally corrupt. Examples: Aristophanes's *The Birds*. Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. In its most extreme forms (e.g., the movies *Fargo* and *Pulp Fiction*), satirical comedy spills over into so-called Black comedy--where we're invited to laugh at events that are mortifying or grotesque.

- **Farce:**

Farce is a type of comedy designed to provoke the audience to simple, hearty laughter- "belly laughs", in the parlance of the theater. To do so it commonly employs highly exaggerated or caricatured types of characters, puts them into improbable and **ludicrous** situations, and makes free use of sexual mix-ups, broad verbal humor, and physical bustle and horseplay. The identifying features of farce are zaniness, slapstick humor, and hilarious improbability. The characters of farce are typically fantastic or absurd and usually far more ridiculous than those in other forms of comedy. At the same time, farcical plots are often full of wild coincidences and seemingly endless twists and complications. Elaborate comic intrigues involving deception, disguise, and mistaken identity are the rules. Examples of the genre include Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, the "Pink Panther" movies, and the films of the Marx Brothers and Three Stooges.

- **Comedy of Humours :**

Another important type of English comedy, conceived and popularized by Ben Jonson, is the 'Comedy of Humours'. The word 'humours' refers to bodily fluids to which medieval medicine attributed to the various types of human temperament according to the predominance of each within the body. Thus a preponderance of blood would make a person 'sanguine', while excess of phlegm would make him or her 'phlegmatic', too much choler (yellow bile) would produce a melancholy one. In Jonson's 'Comedy of Humours' each of the major characters instead of being a well balanced individual, has preponderant humour that gives him a characteristic distortion or eccentricity of disposition. Jonson expounds in his theory in the 'Introduction' to the play *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and **exemplifies** the mode in his later comedies as well.

- **Sentimental Comedy:**

The sentimental comedy of the 18th century was actually a reaction against Comedy of Manners of the Restoration period. In the sentimental comedy, we find characters belonging to the middle class and possessing all sorts of human virtues who are made to suffer in their life and consequently pitied or sympathized by others who do not possess such virtue. The aim of the writers of sentimental comedy was to condemn human vices and flatter human virtues. In this way, these comedies are more or less nothing but moral comedies. For example, Oliver Goldsmith's long poem '*Retaliation*'.

Jeremy Collier (1650-1726) protested against the permissiveness of the 'Comedy of Manners' especially those of Congreve and Vanbrugh, and wrote his treatise entitled *Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. One result of this was the appearance of the new 'Sentimental Comedy'. This form achieved some popularity with respectable middle-class audiences of the 18th century. It showed virtue rewarded by domestic bliss; its plots usually involved unbelievably good middle-class couples and emphasized pathos rather than humour. **Pioneered** by Richard Steele in *The Funeral* (1710) and more fully in *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), it flourished in the mid-century with the French *comedia larmoyante* (Tearful comedy) and in such plays as Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* (1768). The pious moralizing of this tradition also involved an element of preaching as a result of which the entertainment values of these plays was reduced.

- **Tragi- Comedy:**

There are many plays which do not totally subscribe to the spirit of comedy, nor do they embody the tragic emotions. In parts, they may be cheerful but they point to some darker aspects of life as well. But generally these plays are also classified as comedies. William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and T.S.Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, for example, might both be called comedies but they have very little in common with the main stream of the English comedies. To these plays, the term 'tragi-comedy' or 'black comedy' or 'dark comedy' have been applied. William Shakespeare's later plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are 'tragi-comedies' with the pattern of sudden release from delay danger involved in the plots. In modern drama, the term black comedy is often used to describe a kind of drama in which disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare are treated with bitter amusements usually in a manner calculated to offend and shock. Prominent in the 'Theatre of The Absurd', 'black comedy' is represented in Samuel Beckett's *Happu Daus* and Joe Orton's *The Loot*.

6.3 Glossary and Notes:

- **University wits:** dramatists of Renaissance age, John Lily, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, Thomas Nashe and Thomas Kyd
- **Protagonist:** the main character around whom the story revolves/ central character
- **Antagonist:** the entity that acts to frustrate the goals of the protagonist
- **Plot:** the arrangement of the events in a story
- **Conflict:** the central struggle that moves the plot forward. The conflict can be the protagonist's struggle against fate, nature, society, or another person
- **Climax:** action comes to its highest point of conflict
- **Monologue:** long speech by one person in conversation, dramatic composition for one performer.
- **Setting:** tells the readers where and when the story takes place.

- **Point of view:** the position of the narrator of the story and what the writer sees from that point.
- **Fiction:** imaginary characters and events. Fiction can be entirely imaginary or based on real events and people.
- **Symbol:** something that has a literal meaning but also stands for or represents an abstract idea.
- **Theme:** main idea of the story. The message the writer intends to communicate by telling the story.
- **Intrigues:** secret plans to harm or cheat someone.
- **Cynic:** a person who believes that people's motives are always selfish
- **Deception:** the act of deceiving/ a thing that deceives
- **Amuse:** cause to laugh / make time pass pleasantly
- **Decorum:** polite and socially acceptable behavior
- **Grotesque:** ugly or distorted
- **Pioneer:** a person who explores or settles in new region / a person who develops a new ideas or techniques.

6.4 Check Your Progress:

A) Complete the following choosing the correct alternative:

- i) Western drama was born in _____.
 a) Rome b) England c) Greece d) France
- ii) The term drama is derived from the Greek verb 'dran' which means _____.
 a) to act, to do b) to play c) to see d) to read
- iii) Drama is a _____ art.
 a) Composite b) Single c) moving d) showing

- iv) The form of (drama) composition designed for performance in the _____.
- a) school / college b) public place
c) theatre d) function
- v) Aristotle stated that comedy originated in _____ processions.
- a) Phallic b) Zeus c) Dionysus d) Here
- vi) The words comedy or comic are used for anything that is _____.
- a) funny b) serious c) weeping d) ridiculous

B) Fill in the blanks.

1. Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is an example of comedy.
2. The function of tragedy according to Aristotle is
3. Shakespeare's later plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are the example of comedy.
4. The sentimental comedy of the 18th century was actually a reaction against Comedy of
5. The phrase comedy of manners is particularly applied in English to the plays of the

6.5 Exercises :

A) Answer the following question in 250 words.

- i) Comedy as a form of drama
- ii) Write a note on historical development of comedy
- iii) Write a note on types of comedy.

B) Write short notes on the following (150 words)

- i) Tragi-Comedy
- ii) Romantic comedy
- iii) Sentimental comedy

iv) Farce

6.6 Answers to check your progress:

- 6.4 A)**
1. Greece
 2. to act, to do
 3. composite
 4. theatre
 5. phallic
 6. funny

- 6.4 B)**
1. romantic
 2. Catharsis
 3. tragic-comedies
 4. Manners of the Restoration period.
 5. Restoration dramatist.



Module VII
Naga-Mandala

Girish Karnad

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7.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the type of the play
- Understand Girish Karnad's contribution to the drama (Literary work)
- Understand the burning social issues Karnad deals with.
- Analyze the patriarchal patterns in play
- Study the title, setting, structure and plot, in the play.
- Study the different themes in the play

Section -I

Girish Karnad: His Life and Work

Girish Raghunath Karnad (19 May 1938 – 10 June 2019) is an outstanding playwright, a noted stage actor, television artist, a creative figure and a recipient of Sahitya Academy, Padmshri, Padmabhusan and Jnanpith Award, is a multi-dimensional writer. He uses freely the tradition of folk-theatre, myths, symbols, and historical figures for highlighting the basic human instincts and the emotional stimuli response and making the drama lively, thought provoking and gripping. He has directed feature films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English. In the wake of globalization, where drama is gasping for breath, it is the dramatic genius of Girish Karnad, has provided not only oxygen for its life but also energized it by indianising it for further maturation.

Girish Karnad was born on 19th May, 1938 in Matheran a town near Mumbai. He comes of Sarswat Konkani-speaking family. As a youngster, Karnad was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theatre in his village. Karnad's childhood was spent in a small village called Sirsi, in Karnataka. His initial schooling was in Marathi. It is here that he had first-hand experience of the native folk theatre that left an ever lasting impression on his mind. During his formative years, Karnad went through diverse influences. He was exposed to a literary scene where there was a direct clash between Western and native tradition. It was India of the Fifties and the Sixties that surfaced two streams of thought in all walks of life-adoption of new modernistic techniques, a legacy of the colonial rule and adherence to the rich cultural past of the country. Karnad was fascinated by the traditional plays; nonetheless the Western playwrights that he read during his college days opened up for him "a new world of magical possibilities."

Karnad moved to Dharwad, Karnataka University to do his graduation. He graduated from here in 1958. In 1958 Karnad moved from Dharwad to Bombay to pursue his post-graduation. There he had an experience that proved to be a turning point in his life. For the first time he watched a modern theatre and got an altogether different experience from those he had watched earlier in his village. In the meantime, Girish Karnad got the prestigious Rhodes scholarship to do his Master's degree from Magdalen College, Oxford. He spent three years over there from 1960 to 1963. It gave him a wide exposure to the western plays and theatre activities.

On his return to India in 1963, Karnad joined Oxford University Press, Madras. It gave him an opportunity to get exposed to different kinds of writing in India and elsewhere. It shaped his mind and art and also gave him an insight into the market. His tour of England and his assignments with the Press enriched his creative genius. He was awarded Homi Bhabha fellowship for two years (1970 to 1972). In 1974 he was appointed Director of the Film and Television Institute, Pune. In 1984, he went to the U.S.A. as Fulbright Scholar-in Residence at the Department of South Asian Languages and civilization, University of Chicago. He served as Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. In 1994 he was awarded Doctor of Letters Degree by the Karnataka University, Dharwad. Padma Shri was conferred upon him in 1974 and Padma Bhusan in 1992 by the President of India. He is also the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award and Jnanpith Award and has several other feathers in his cap. He provided the voice of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, in the

audiobook of Kalam's autobiography by Charkha Audiobooks, *Wings of Fire*. He died on 10th June, 2019.

Karnad's writing of the play *Yayati* without any premeditation, set things straight. He was to write plays, not poetry which he aspired to write, and that the source of his inspiration was native stuff, history, mythology and folklore. Even at the age of twenty-two, he realized that he could not be a poet, but only a playwright, until he wrote this play, Karnad fancied himself a poet. During his teens, he had written poetry and had trained himself to write in English. Karnad says that the greatest ambition of his life was to become a poet. By the time he was in college, he wanted to write in English, become a novelist and be internationally famous. There have been more poets and more novelists, but there have been very few playwrights and very few good plays. Karnad further realized that the art of a poet or a novelist was easier than that of a dramatist.

Karnad has a great insight into human nature. He has acted various roles in a large number of movies and many of his programmes have been televised. His knowledge of human nature has made him a great actor. He is well aware of the paradoxes in human nature and has thorough comprehension of ironies of life. His various roles as actor and the protagonists in his plays illustrate the glaring paradoxes in human nature and life.

Girish Karnad is a product of cross-cultural fertilization. Marathi is his mother tongue; Kannada is the language of his childhood that became the language of the writer. English is his academic language in which he has acquired proficiency. Besides, he knows Hindi and Sanskrit, too. On the one hand, he inherited Indian tradition of drama and on the other, he acquired modern techniques of drama. He makes good use of Indian mythology in his plays and finds parables for the contemporary situations. He picks up stories and characters from Indian mythology and history and through them he dramatizes the contemporary realities.

The Major Works of Girish Karnad are:

- 1 *Yayati* (1961)
2. *Tughlaq* (1964)
3. *Hayavadana* (1971)
4. *Naga-Mandala* (1989)
5. *Tale-Danda* (1993)
6. *The Fire and The Rain* (1998)

7. *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004)

8. *The Dreams of Tipu - Sultan* (2004)

9. *Two Monologues: Flowers and Broken Images* (2004)

Works of Girish Karnad:

1. **Yayati** (1961): *Yayati* (1961), Karnad's first play reinterprets an ancient myth taken from The Mahabharata and other Puranas is a self consciously existentialist drama based on the theme of responsibility. In the Maharabharata, Puru an obedient son accepts his father's old age -- a great sacrilege indeed. Yayati wanted someone else in his kingdom to ace his old age in exchange for money, land and even part of kingdom. But no one is prepared for the sacrifice. Ultimately Puru accepts with a great sense of respect to his father. But alas! His wife Chitrlekha cannot bear this. She consumes poison and ends her life. At the end of the play, Yayati takes back the old age from his son and Puru has to witness the death of his wife.

2. **Tughlaq** (1964): *Tughlaq* (1964) the second play of Girish Karnad, based on history. It was originally written in Kannada but subsequently translated into English by Karnad himself. It was such play as was established him as one of the foremost playwrights of India. This play is a piece of theatre par excellence. This a historical play on the life of Sultan Muhammad - bin - Tughlaq of the fourteenth century India, "certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi, and also one of the biggest failures."

Girish Karnad has succeeded in mixing fact and fiction to give the picture of the fourteenth century which is quite relevant to the contemporary scene as in India, particularly at time of Nehru's administration. Tughlaq was surrounded by stupid Amirs. They were in collision with the king in robbing people and punishing them for being robbed. The Amirs did not advise him correctly nor did they carry out his orders honestly. Karnad has satirized a nobleman; an Amir who was a courtier, a very important person of the government machinery in Jugular. It is with the help of this play, Karnad wanted to prove that India of today is not different from the India of the fourteenth century, though the people and the personages have changed, the cause for fight and involvements have not. The struggle - the fight of the individual against another individual has been substituted by the fight between one group and the other to secure power.

3. **Hayavadana** (1971): *Hayavadana* (1971), Girish Karnad's third play was originally written in Kannada and later on translated into English, is a bold and successful experiment on folk theme. The play is richly symbolic and spectacular. The main-plot, the story of a love triangle between Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini, is drawn from the Kathasaritsagar, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. The original story, a part of the Vaitalpanchvishati, narrated by Vaital, a ghost, to Vikram, an adventurous Indian King, poses a moral problem, whether the man with Devadatta's head or the man with his body is regarded as Padmini's real husband. And the solution is given that the head being the best part of man, the man with Devadatta's head is her real husband. Thomas Mann, the great German writer, in his reworking this story in *The Transposed Head* ridicules the mechanical conception that holds the head superior to the body. Mann believes that the human body is a complex creation of nature for the fulfillment of human destiny and the transposition of the head does not liberate one from his physical nature. Karnad draws heavily on Thomas Mann's story, but he uses the story to explore the theme of human identity in a world of tangled relationship and struggle for perfection.

In short, *Hayavadana* is a quest of man's basic and inherent desire for completeness or perfection. It is an attempt to drive home the point that the search for completeness is futile on part of man and he should be satisfied and be happy with what he has rather than spending time in maniacal pursuit of perfection. The play brings out the follies and idiocies of the characters in their search for completeness though in a comic way.

4. **Naga-Mandala** (1989): *Naga-Mandala* (1989), Karnad's latest feminist play; staged at Rock Gardens, Chandigarh, has earned an immense popularity and rank in the modern Indian theatre. In this play, the playwright wants to show the relationship between man and woman, the concept of chastity and the theme of problematic marriage. *Naga-Mandala* of Girish Karnad presents the deplorable states of women in Indian society. *Naga-Mandala*, a play within the play, begins with the Prologue. The characters of the Prologue are the narrator- characters of the play proper and their story constitutes the sub plot of the play. The setting of the "Prologue" is the inner sanctum of a ruined temple. The playwright wants to say in the prologue that man is a bundle of many weaknesses, He is either unaware of them or he cannot get rid of them. Karnad's plays are particularly concerned with the psychological problems, dilemmas and conflicts experienced by the modern Indian men and

women in their different social situations. His play *Naga-Mandala* is a powerful portrait of the agony and anguish faced by both men and women in their development into adult roles and social adjustment in a society where the individual is given little space for self- development, awareness and independence as a being.

The psychological inadequacy that the young man is caught in prevents his self transcendence causing acute lack of understanding and communication between him and a woman. It is a threat to the family and society, standing in incessant completion in the story, and most of its variants have tragic ending. The existential problem that perhaps every young man faces as he passes through his adolescence and he must learn how to overcome becomes explicit in Karnad's plays. The *Naga-Mandala* probes into the female and the male growth into selfhood and their adjustment with the social roles allotted to them in the traditional society.

Naga-Mandala deals with the story of a young girl, Rani, who is newly married to Appanna, and their gradual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the institution of marriage. Rani is the main female character of the play, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint, family where she sees her husband in two unconnected roles - as a stranger during the day and as a lover at night. In *Naga-Mandala*, Girish Karnad has successfully tested evil on the stage. Evil always triumphs. The watch dog and the mongoose have been killed by the Naga, the evil incarnation; the Naga succeeds in making love with Rani; the guilty Rani successfully completes the ordeal and she is considered a goddess. The concept of chastity as well as marriage, love and sex are successfully depicted by the playwright. The title of the play is apt and suggestive. It comes not from any human character, but from a snake – Naga. The notable features of the play are the use of the chorus and the music. Shape shifting is one of the devices very clearly and effectively used by Karnad.

5. *Tale-Danda* (1993): *Tale-Danda* (1993) which means death by beheading, has been acclaimed widely for its brilliant analysis of the ills that plague Indian society today, is considered to be an outstanding play, in which, the concept of social deformity of the Hindu society in India is cleverly presented by Karnad. Even today, most of the people accept it and observe the customs that sustain it. The central object of the play is centered on human being combination, interacting, entering into one another's lives, becoming a part of one another. The social deformity in the Hindu society took the form of caste system.

6. The Fire and The Rain (1998): The Fire and The Rain, the latest play of Karnad was written in Kannada and later on, it was translated in to English and published by Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi, in which, the playwright treats the problem of a-moralism in contemporary life. As the title of the play, The Fire and The Rain suggests the play focuses both on the negative and positive human emotions, jealousy, betrayal, deceit as well as selfless love. Thus the fire is the fire of revenge, lust, anger, envy, treachery violence and death. The rain, on the other hand, symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness, revival and regeneration.

7. Bali: The Sacrifice (2004): Bali: The Sacrifice (2004), another important play of Girish Karnad, which is based on the myth of Cock of Dough. The theme of the play has been derived from thirteenth century Kannada epic Yashodhara Charite by Janna, which in turn refers back through an eleventh century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja to the ninth century Sanskrit epic Yashastilaka by Somadeva Suri. It deals with the theme of violence versus non-violence and Brahmanism versus Jainism. It may be considered a tribute to M.K. Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, who was an apostle of non-violence and thought non-violence as an essential instrument to India's existence in the cruel and political arena. Sacrifice of animals is an age - old tradition in Brahmanism. To please their gods and goddesses, the Hindus used to offer animals like sheep, goat, buffalo, cock etc, but as soon as Jainasim and Buddhism came into existence, they raised voice against the killings of animals and birds as offering for gods and goddess. They revolted against the violent rituals. The hot discussion and debate on this issue between two groups of philosopher concluded that Brahmins should adopt some substitute to the worship for live animals. Accordingly, Brahmins adopted animals of dough for sacrificial rituals. They adopted dough as it is eatable and can be a taken as Prasad of gods are goddesses. Though at some places in India, the statues of animals made of gold, silver and copper are offered in the temples, dough was used because an offering makes sense only if it is meant as food for gods and is, therefore cooked and consumed by the devotees. The supporters of Jainism still consider this sacrificial tradition cruel and dehumanizing because in their view, intended violence is equally condemnable as actual violence.

8. The Dreams of Tipu - Sultan (2004): The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (Tippuvina Kanasugalu) 2004 is a play written by Indian playwright Girish Karnad. The play has been performed many times by different groups around the world but mostly in the

subcontinent mainly in Pakistan and India. The story follows the last days as well as the historic moments in the life of the Ruler of Mysore through the eyes of an Indian court historian and a British Oriental scholar. The play was recently performed by the Lahore Grammar School Senior Boys Branch at Ali auditorium, Lahore and made its debut on the 24th of April. Major sponsors included FM91, Unilever, NMST and BATA. The play was directed by Omair Rana and co directed by Mr. Nauman Faizi. It was received very warmly and the public turned out in large numbers to witness the performance.

The figure of Tipu Sultan has continued to dominate Indian and British imagination for over two centuries, as the endless flow of scholarly works, ballads, plays and novels about his tempestuous life and tragic end testifies. What, however, is less well known is that this man, who spent a large part of his life on horseback, maintained a record of his dreams, which he kept concealed from his nearest associates? The Dreams of Tipu Sultan examines the inner life of this warrior, political visionary, and dreamer.

9. Two Monologues: Flowers and Broken Images (2004)

Flowers: Having a keen insight into human nature, Girish Karnad has delved deep into human psyche in order to present conflict - external and internal - in all his dramas which demonstrate his new approach and techniques like incorporation of myth, history and technology reflecting contemporariness and converting them quite suited to technology in the cyber age.

Monologue is the dramatic genre in the form of address that makes the protagonist speak his thoughts aloud or directly to the reader, audience or character. The other characters do not speak though they remain there inactive and are known only through the stream of his consciousness. The monologue that is written keeping stage direction in view and setting also becomes equally impotents in theatrical effectiveness.

Broken Images: Girish Karnad's second monologue Broken Images differs from his other plays in two respects. First, it is a monologue, not a full-length play and for the first time, he has not used his favourite myth technique. Secondly, he has introduced the technology that is absent in his earlier plays. For the first time, realizing the importance of technology in this cyber age, he has turned the image on the screen into a character and this is his greatest triumph as he has updated the

drama pacing with technology. No doubt, there is one character Manjula who is interrogated by her own doppelganger, a machine made image on the screen. The image itself turns into character and talks to her like a human being on the ethics of human issues. It is her image who exposes her through her tricky and well logical remarks.

To sum up, the two monologues Flowers and Broken Images are quite innovative in theme and technique. The folk myth is incorporated in Flowers to sketch the parallel line in the life of the protagonist while the myth in Broken Images is quite advanced in the form of the electronic machine that creates the doppelganger to interrogate. Girish Karnad feels the effect of technology, which is a consequence of globalization and does not deny the day when the technology interferes human beings on the ground of ethics of human interest. Regarding the dialogues, Flowers is more narrative than dramatic in conception. Though, it is difficult task to offer an outlet to a character and outpours what he has felt and done. Thematically, both the monologues are sound and once again, Karnad has introduced his well-known confrontation - between love and duty in Flowers and authenticity and duplicity in Broken Images. The playwright, in his Flowers spiritualizes the aesthetic of flowers while Broken Images breaks the ethics of pseudo-images regarding the questions related to languages and the originality in literary world.

Check Your Progress:

- 1) Girish Karnad was born on -----.
 - a) 19th May, 1938.
 - b) 19th May, 1928
 - c) 19th May, 1935
 - d) 19th May, 1936
- 2) Girish Karnad's full name is-----.
 - a) Girish Raghoji Karnad
 - b) Girish Raghunath Karnad
 - c) Girish Ramesh Karnad
 - d) Girish Rangrao Karnad
- 3) In 1994, Girish Karnad was awarded Doctor of Letters Degree by the ----- University.
 - a) Shivaji
 - b) Gujarat
 - c) Karnataka
 - d) Mumbai
- 4) Girish Karnad has given voice to ----- autobiography.

women. The play also mocks the idea of chastity and aims at the emancipation and empowerment of women.

The play is in every respect a re-enactment of the original folk-tale. The first story teller is the grandmother who believes that the flames of fire have physical existence. They are given separate identity; Kusbi oil flame, Kerosene oil flame, Castor oil flame, etc. Flame is gossip-prone. There is a folk belief that when lamps are put out, the flames gather at some remote place generally, at the outskirts of the village and gossip. They talk in female voices. It must be so because gossip is often associated with women. These tales are narrated normally by the older women in the family—while children are being fed in the evenings or being put to bed.

One of the flames tells the story of an old woman who knew a story and a song but had neither told the story to anyone, nor sung the song. The old woman thus violated the tradition. Stories must not be kept in confinement but must be related to others. The story and the song escaped when the old woman was snoring. The story became a young beautiful woman and the song a sari. The old woman scolded her old husband as she saw a young woman dressed in a sari in her husband's room. These oral tales are “travelling metaphors” (Ramanujan) that acquire fresh meanings with a new narrator. In A. K. Ramanujan’s script, the story and the song take the form of a man's coat and shoes. The coat hangs itself on a peg and the shoes place themselves under it. When the husband returns home, he asks his wife to whom the coat and the shoes belong. But she is unaware of it. The suspicious husband leaves in a fit of jealousy and sits in an old temple where the flames gather.

A man, who is a playwright, happens to watch all the flames gather in a dilapidated temple where he has taken shelter that night. The man is unhappy and is trying to remain awake. He has been dozing off every night and it is the last night of the month. A mendicant has cursed him to die. His crime is that he has written plays and staged them. He, thereby, caused many good people “to fall asleep.” He swears that if he survives that night, he will give-up story-telling and play-writing.

Karnad incorporates the myth of the flames into this play. He gives the flame, the function of the Greek chorus. Borrowing from the Yakshagana, Karnad makes Story the Bhagavata, in the form of a woman, the flames gather at the outskirts of the village (Act I) to listen to her. The man also listens to her as he wants to keep himself awake that night. The Story, the man and the flames remain on the stage throughout

the play. The flames are used as stage property, for example, the ant-hill, a mirror, a dog, a wall etc. In the play, the man and the Story observe, analyse, narrate and comment on the subsequent scenes.

The other story that A. K. Ramanujan dealt with, forms the central plot of *Naga-Mandala*. The play portrays a newly married couple: Rani (every woman) and Appanna (every man) and a lover Naga. It is an eternal love triangle in a situation of adultery-husband, wife and lover.

A Note on the Source Text of *Naga-Mandala*:

The author has acknowledged that A.K. Ramanujan's two oral stories are the source for him to write *Naga-Mandala*. Indeed, these two oral stories are available in print in a book entitled *A Flowering Tree and other oral tales from India* edited by Stuart Blackburn and Alan Dundes. The source story of the minor plot appears as the first story in the book entitled "*A Story and a Song*". It is a story about a couple in a village. The wife knows a story and song but never articulates them to any one at all. Thus they feel suffocated as they are kept to her. However, they escape from her one day while she is sleeping with her mouth open wide. They decide to take revenge on her by transforming themselves into a pair of shoes and man's coat respectively and are found outside the hose. When the husband returns home, he finds them and suspects that his wife receives a visitor secretly. When he enquires his wife, she replies that she knows no visitor and thus their conversation leads them into a quarrel. Being disappointed, the husband leaves for the local temple to sleep that night. Interestingly, this temple is the venue for the lamps to assemble and gossip about their families. The lamp of the house of the couple arrives there late and narrates the quarrel between the husband and the wife. On hearing this, the husband gets his suspicion cleared and thus returns home.

Karnad has incorporated this story with slight modification in his play *Naga - Mandala*. He has shown that the story and song are transformed into a woman and a sari respectively. The lamp tells the story not of the couple but of Rani. The main plot of the play is an adaptation of the fifty sixth story entitled "*The Serpent Lover*" in the said collection. In the original text, it is the story of Kamakshi. Her husband does not indulge in the conjugal love with her as he has been under the love spell of a concubine. An old woman, from the neighbourhood, tries to help her by giving a root suggesting her that she should serve its paste through the meal. Accordingly, she

mixes its paste in the sweet porridge but is taken aback to it turning into blood red. Therefore, she spills the love potion in the anthill behind her house. The king of snakes, which lives in the anthill, consumes the love potion and consequently falls head over heel in love with her. Then he visits her every night in the form of her husband and makes love to her. As a result, she becomes pregnant. On discovering this factor, the snake reveals its original identity and persuades her to follow his advice to safeguard her from the crisis. The snake lover suggests her that she should approach the king in his court in the next day and argue that her husband is the father of the child. She should propose to undergo the test of truth by holding the snake in the Siva temple if she is not trusted. Accordingly, she meets the king and pleads for her case. But her husband refuses to trust her. Hence she faces the test of truth by taking the snake from the anthill. As per the plan, the snake does no harm to her. On the contrary, it hangs around her neck like a garland. As a result, she is declared chaste. Kamakshi and her husband are united now and live together happily. She gives birth to a divine child after nine months. Then the snake lover advises her to send her son to her husband's harlot on a condition. Accordingly, the child shall go there with jewels weighed at home and it shall return without any loss of that jewels. With the help of the snake lover, some of the jewels are stolen and the concubine is held responsible for it. As a punishment, she is ordered to serve Kamakshi as a maid in her house. The snake enters the bed room of Kamakshi in one night to observe how happy she is. On finding her to be sleeping next to her child and husband happily, it is unable to bear the change. Therefore, it commits suicide by hanging with the help of her long hair. On waking up next morning, they see the corpse of the snake. She explains that it is the snake god to which she has prayed that she should get her lost husband back. Then he agrees to give it the last rites through his son. The story ends like this.

Naga-Mandala Overview

Naga-Mandala hangs around Rani, the protagonist, her husband's indifferent attitude towards her and her incognizant affair with King Cobra. Rani loses her husband Appanna to a concubine and becomes anxious about the situation. Kurudavva, an old blind lady, advises Rani to use two magical roots, a small one and a big one which can enchant her husband back to herself. When the small one fails, she decides to use the big one, but she is reluctant to fascinate her husband by this way. She determines to allure Appanna the other way, by love and affection instead.

So, she pours the paste of the root mixed in curry into an ant-hill where a king cobra consumes it. The King Cobra (Naga) assumes the appearance of Appanna and replaces him at nights. Rani gets pregnant by the Naga. Appanna gets enraged by her suspicious conception and brings Rani to village elders where she takes oath on a cobra on the advice of Naga. The elders believe her to be of divine birth as the cobra moves around her neck like a garland and her innocence is proved. Appanna finally accepts her and the child and they lead a happy life.

The Title of the play

It is important to note that the title of the play *Naga -Mandala* comes not from any human character, but from a snake- Naga. The story of the Cobra suggests that the play not merely dramatizes the folk tales in modern interpretation it also implies a deeper meaning at various levels. In our Hindu mythology, the Naga represents several images. In south India, many houses have their own shrine which is often a grove reserved for snakes, consisting of trees, festooned with creepers, situated in corner of the garden. Snakes are also the symbol of human maleness and strength. Nagas are sometimes portrayed as handsome men, or as half-man and half-snake, the top half using the torso of man, the lower half a coiled snake.

Karnad in *Naga- Mandala* has made use of the folk tales the “mixing of human and non human world” as a distancing device which brings in the element of alienation in the play. The folk tale element of *Naga- Mandala* and magical power which the Cobra possesses remind us that we are watching a play. Moreover, the role of the Man and the story is as the narrator- character. So, the play is interspersed with their analysis, observations and narrations which continually remind the spectator that he is only ‘watching’ a play.

Naga-Mandala: The Prologue

The man in the Prologue is told by a mendicant, "You must keep wake at least one whole night this month. If you can do that, you'll live. If not. You will die on the last night of the month. The man fails to realize the significance of this prediction. He takes it literally and breaks into laughter because he thinks that keeping a wake one night is not a task, failing to realize that keeping awake will rather be a Herculean task for a man who dozes off every night. He passes night after night asleep to the fact that the sword of Damocles hangs over his head. Only on the last night of the month, which can be the last night of his life also, he wakes up to the fact

that he has to do something to avert his death, yet he is not sure that he will succeed in his efforts. He comes to dilapi-dated temple with an unidentifiable statue to pass his last night. But this temple is a favorite haunt of the Flames that come from different houses to exchange notes on the present conditions of the society.

Flame (1) comes from the house of a miserly fellow who retires to bed early to save spending on lamp oil. Flame (4) comes from a house in which the old mother has died neglected. She had bed sores and the house stank with phlegm pus and urine. Now the master and mistress have the freedom to pass their nights in voluptuous pleasures. But flame (3) is forced to witness lasciviousness of the master who needs light to feast his eyes on the limbs of his wife to make the rest of him to react. Thus the Flames find that most of the people are asleep to the spiritual needs of man.

The New Flame has a different story to tell. The old mistress has seen a young woman dressed in a sari coming out of the room in which her husband is sleeping. This kicks up a rumpus. In fact, the old woman had a story and a song imprisoned in her mind. Both the story and the song are simmering to be free and they succeed eventually. The story takes the shape of a woman and song becomes a sari. The woman wraps herself in a sari. In fact, it is nothing but a hallucination. The old woman had the doubt lurking in her mind that her husband has illicit relations with some woman. Her suspicion appears in the shape of a woman.

However, this story also comes to the temple and desires that it should be heard by somebody who can pass it on to others. Flames cannot do it because they are non-living objects. The man offers to hear the story agrees to the condition. In this way, the prologue describes the aberrations of man and woman to give the message that men in general are slaves of passion and are asleep to the hard realities of life.

NAGA-MANDALA Plot:

There are two plots in *Naga - Mandala*. The first plot is about the flames that gather in a village temple to exchange gossip about the households they inhabit. This is a minor plot but used as a device to introduce the major plot, which is about the plight of woman called Rani. Rani and Appanna is a newly married couple. The latter has been in liaison with the concubine because of which he never stays at home at night. He returns home during the daytime and stays with the prostitute in the night. While he leaves home at night, he keeps his wife inside the house and locks

the door from outside. Kurudavva, who is a blind woman in the neighbourhood and is an old friend of Appanna's mother, meets Rani through the window and gives two magic roots to attract her husband towards her. When she has tried the first small root, it makes no effect on her husband. Then she tries the second big one and she becomes scared to find that the food in which it is mixed becomes blood red.

Therefore, she pours it in the hole by anthill. The king snake of the ant hill consumes it and falls in love with her. It visits her in the form of Appanna and she becomes pregnant subsequently. Appanna alleges that his wife is unfaithful to him and on the suggestion of the snake-Appanna, she faces the snake ordeal and gets through it proving her chastity. Her husband becomes slave of her thereafter. The snake lover visits her once after sometime and becomes vexed finding Rani and Appanna are in harmony. Without being able to tolerate it, the snake commits suicide in Rani's long tress. On the advice of Rani, her son cremates the dead. In the minor plot, he has used the tale of lamps to suggest the practice of gossip in the villages in the common place like temples. Karnad has used the tale as a device of drama in *Naga-Mandala*.

***Naga-Mandala* Act Wise Summary**

ACT-I

The narrator of *Naga-Mandala* is the story and is narrated to a man. The main characters of are the Naga and Rani. There is a couple, Appanna and Rani, in a village. Appanna's illegitimate affair with a concubine keeps him away from Rani. He spends most of his time away and visits home only during lunch Rani is locked up inside the home. Their married life begins to ruin.

Rani longs for her husband's love but finds no development in Appanna's daily routines Appanna would always yell at Rani even during the small amount of time he spends with her. She receives no love and liberty in the house. No one is there to support her there. At any cost Rani wants to win back her husband.

Kurudavva, an old blind lady, and her son Kappanna come to meet Appanna at his house one day. They find the house is closed. They discuss Appanna's infamous activities with his concubine. Rani hears this and comes to the window. Kurudavva learns Rani's pathetic situation. She gives her two love roots and advises to drug her husband with the roots, first to the small one and then the big one.

The small root is mixed with milk and given to Appanna, but nothing changes in his routine. Then she decides to use the big root mixed in curry. But she loses hope to win her husband in this way, so she pours it into an ant hill where a King Cobra, the Naga of the title, resides. Naga consumes the curry and is overpowered by the strength of the magical root. At once, Naga falls into her love. He begins to follow Rani.

ACT- II

Naga takes the form of Appanna and visits Rani at nights. He approaches her in a romantic way and she is left speechless. She is happy with the absolute bliss and lays her head on his shoulder. He promises to visit her during nights. Naga vanishes at the sunrise.

When her husband behaves in the same way unchanged during the day, she imagines her bliss at night is a dream. But she again enjoys the pleasure again during the following night when Naga visits her in Appanna's form. She enquires why he is brutal during the day and gentle during night or whether it was a dream last night. He replies that it is absolutely true and advises not to suspect it. Unaware the truth behind, she is convinced to go on with whatever comes on to her.

Rani notices blood on Naga's body. She hurries to bring ointment. She sees the cobra reflection in the mirror box she screams and says Naga that she has found a cobra reflection in the mirror night at the same place he is sitting now. But she can find no snake there when turns back. Sly applies ointment on his body Naga vanishes with the sunrise.

Kurudavva and Kappanna come to visit Rani. They scream outside seeing a cobra coming out of Rani's bathroom drainage. Rani finds her husband is not at home. Kurudavva says that she has been there for half an hour, but Appanna is not seen coming out of the house. Rani is confused.

At noon, Kappanna visits home. She yells at Rani as his dog is found dead. Next day, he brings a mongoose to home. Within a day of time it is also injured by something. That night, Naga does not come. His absence continues for two more weeks as he is injured severely on account of his fight with mongoose.

Almost after two weeks, Naga visits Rani informed of her pregnancy. Naga is not happy. Naga disappears and Appanna appears. He is enraged coming to know

about Rani's pregnancy. They are not together in bed for long time. So, he accuses her a harlot and declares to take her to Panchayat. He locks her down into the house and leaves.

At night, Naga appears. She lashes him with a plenty of questions about his behaviour that day, Naga convinces her and advises her on what to do in the Panchayat to prove her innocence. In meantime, Kurudawa is restless; walking here and there, because of her son Kappanna is missing for one week. Rani seeks Kunudavva's help in the Panchayat but it seems impossible.

At the Panchayat, Rani pulls out a cobra from an ant hill and takes an oath on it promising that she has not touched anybody till the day except her husband and that snake. The snake moves around her neck and a garland from this incident, the Panchayat declares that she is of a divine birth and comes to a conclusion that Rani is not a whore and thus her innocence is proved. Appanna is now ready to accept her.

Both Appanna and Rani begin a happy life with the new born child. One night, Naga appears again Rani is found in the bed with her husband. Naga intends to kill her, but changes his thought out of love. He takes the form of a small snake and hides in her long hair. She wakes up and feels her hair is unusually weighing. She combs her hair and a small dead cobra falls down. Appanna is happy that their son is saved from cobra; she is a goddess, he says. Rani requests to perform a ritual for the cobra on this day every year to which Appanna gladly agrees.

When the story (the narrator of *Naga-Mandala*) ends its story, the listener (the man) does not accept the conclusion. He provides his own conclusion. When Rani finds the cobra falling down from her hair, it is alive: Appanna tries to kill the snake. But Rani takes the cobra and hides it in her long hair again. At the end of *Naga-Mandala* all live a happy life.

CRITICAL STUDY OF THE STORY OF NAGA- MANDALA

Prologue-Morbidity of Men:

“Naga-Mandala” of Girish Karnad presents the deplorable state of women in Indian Society. The play is written in two Acts with a prologue. The writer wants to say in the Prologue that man is a bundle of weakness, but he is either not aware of them, or he cannot get rid of them. The man in the Prologue is told by a mendicant, "You must keep awake at least one whole night this month. If you can do that, you'll live. If not, you will die on the last night of the month." The man fails to realise the

significance of this prediction. He takes it literally and breaks into laughter because he thinks that keeping awake one night is not a task, failing to realise that keeping awake will rather be a Herculean task for a man who dozes off every night. He passes night after night asleep to the fact that the sword of Damocles hangs over his head. Only on the last night of the month, which can be the last night of his life also, he wakes up to the fact that he has to do something to avert his death, yet he is not sure that he will succeed in his efforts.

He comes to a delapidated temple with an unidentifiable statue to pass his last night. But this temple is a favourite haunt of the Flames that come from different houses to exchange notes on the present conditions of the society. Flame (1) comes from the house of a miserly fellow who retires to bed early to save spending on lamp oil (khusbi oil). Flame (4) comes from a house in which the old mother has died neglected. She had bed sores and the house stank with phlegm pus and urine. Now the master and mistress have the freedom to pass their nights in voluptuous pleasures. But Flame (3) is forced to witness lasciviousness of the master who needs light to feast his eyes on the limbs of his wife to make the rest of him to react. Thus the Flames find that most of the people are asleep to the spiritual needs of man.

Sufferings of Women:

The New Flame has a different story to tell. The old mistress has seen a young woman dressed in a sari coming out of the room in which her husband is sleeping. This kicks up a rumpus. In fact, the old woman had a story and a song imprisoned in her mind. Both the story and the song are simmering to be free and they succeed eventually. The story takes the shape of a woman and song becomes a sari. The woman wraps herself in a sari. In fact, it is nothing but a hallucination. The old woman had the doubt lurking in her mind that her husband has illicit relations with some woman. Her suspicion appears in the shape of a woman

However, this story also comes to the temple and desires that it should be heard by somebody who can pass it on to others. Flames can do it because they are non-living objects. The man offers to hear the story on the condition that he will be kept awake all the night. The story agrees to the condition. Thus the Prologue describes the aberrations of man and woman to give the message that men in general are slaves of passion and are asleep to the hard realities of life.

Incarceration of Rani:

The Act 1 presents the story of a young girl, named Rani, who is the only child of her parents. She is called Rani because she is the queen of long tresses. "When her hair was tied up in a knot, it was as though a black cobra lay curled on the nape of her neck, coil upon glistening coil when it hung loose, the tresses flowed, a torrent of black along her young limbs, and got entangled in her silver anklets." Her fond father

finds a match for her and gets her married to a young man who is rich and his parents are dead. The writer calls him Appanna.

Appanna brings the young wife to his house and claps her under lock and key with the injunction that he will come only once in the afternoon and he must find his lunch ready. He passes his days and nights with a concubine and Rani passes her life like a deserted wife. Her dreams of a happy married life are shattered.

Rani is depressed and dejected:

Dejected and heart-broken Rani has none to support her in her solitary cell, except her parents who come in her day-dreams to console her. She misses her parents so much that she sees them in hallucination-

"Then Rani's parents embrace her and cry. They kiss her and caress her. At night she sleeps between them. So she is not frightened any more. Don't worry they promise her. "We won't let you go away again ever! Her shattered dreams also assume strange shapes-"In the morning, the stag with the golden antlers comes to the door. He calls out to Rani. She refuses to go 'I am not a stag' he explains. I am a prince.' In her utter despondency she talks to herself and meets the prince of her dreams that, she hoped once he would come to woo her. She looks into vacancy and breaks into sobs on realising how cruel her fate has been to her.

Help of Kurudavva:

If bolt comes from the blue, the help also sometimes comes from an unexpected quarter.

Kurudavva, a friend of Appanna's mother, becomes anxious to meet Appanna's wife. Kurudavva is blind but her regard for her deceased friend outweighs her disability. She tells her son Kappanna-

"--- he (Appanna) is the son of my best friend. His mother and I were like sisters. Poor thing, she died bringing him into this world. Now a new daughter in law comes to her house. How can I go as though nothing has happened?"

This angel makes friends with despondent girl, Rani. She takes no time to know that Rani is being persecuted by Appanna. She tells Kappanna, "He keeps his wife locked up like a caged bird." She knows by touch that Rani is beautiful-"Ayyo! How beautiful you are. Ears like hibiscus. Skin like young mango leaves. How can that Appanna gallivant around leaving such loveliness wasting away at home?"

Kurudavva is moved with pity. She asks Rani not to worry, and sends Kappanna to bring the roots which have magical quality of igniting love in the heart of the man that eats them. She has tested them on her own husband. She gives the roots to Rani with the instruction, "Grind it into a nice paste and feed it to your husband and watch

the results. Once he smells you he won't go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly."

Effect of magical roots on Appanna:

Accordingly, Rani prepares the paste and gives to Appanna with the milk. He gulps down the milk but becomes crueler. Evidently the love root has failed to work on stone-hearted Appanna. He is impervious to love. Rani compares well with the Princess of the fable whom "... the demon locks her up in his castle. Then it rains for seven days and seven nights. It pours. The sea floods the city. The waters break down the door of the castle. Then a big whale comes to Rani and says, "Come Rani, let us go."

Rani's Concern for Appanna's Health:

Kurudavva comes again to see whether the lock is gone. She is surprised to see that the lock is still there. It clearly indicates that the love root has not made any impact upon Appanna. Therefore, Kurudavva asks Rani to give the bigger root to him. But Rani is stunned by an explosion as she pours the paste into the curry. She is flustered when the curry turned blood red. How can she know that it will not be poisonous? She decides not to serve the curry to him.

She pours this curry into the ant-hill. As she turns her back, a king cobra lifts its hood, hissing out of the ant-hill. Thus the cobra comes to love Rani.

Naga's love for Rani:

Act II presents the love story of Rani and the Naga. Appanna has brought a dog to keep blind Kurudavva away from his wife. The dog is tied to the door. The Naga assumes the shape of Appanna to make love with Rani. He comes every night when Appanna is away. He assuages the hurt feelings of Rani with enquiries like whether beating this morning hurts her, whether she misses her parents, how long is it since she hasn't had a good night's sleep. Rani tells him that she used to sleep in the afternoon when the household work was over. But now the dog he has brought barks all the day and doesn't let her sleep. The Naga promises that won't happen from tomorrow. He puts her head on his shoulder and caresses her to sleep.

The Naga kills the dog next day and comes to Rani in the night. Rani is confused Appanna of the day is totally different from Appanna of the night. The former is cold and cruel while the latter is warm and loving. She fails to make out how the man changes so completely. She does not believe her sensed-"His visit last Night-I assumed I must have dreamt that I am certainly not dreaming now, which means I am going mad. Spending the whole day by me is rotting my brain." The Naga knows it all, but it can't help it. The most that he can do is to stop coming to her in the night, but how can Rani afford to lose these rare moments of love-"Why do

you tease me like this? I am sick of being alone. And then tonight, I was terrified you might not come-that what I remembered last night may be just a dream. But what am I to say if your spin riddles like this?"

Pervading spirit of love:

The nightly visits of the Naga culminate in sexual intercourse which is a new experience of Rani. She feels ashamed to imagine what her parents will think of her. The Naga explains to her that the spirit of love pervades the whole universe. Even animals and plants do it-"Frogs coraking in pelting rain, tortoises singing soundlessly in the dark, foxes, crabs, ants, rattlers, sharks, swallows- even the geese! The female begins to smell like the wet earth. And Stung by her smell the king Cobra starts searching for his queen. The tiger bellows for his mate.... within everything that sprouts, grows, stretches, creaks, and blooms-every where, those who come together, cling, fall apart lazily! It is there and there, everywhere."

Naga kills the dog. In Naga's absence Rani pines for him:

Appanna comes next day to find that dog is dead. He tells Rani, "This was no ordinary hound. It cornered a cheetah once. It must have sensed the Cobra. It must have given a fight. Didn't you hear anything at night?" Appanna is sure that the Cobra has killed the dog. Therefore, he brings a mongoose this time. The lover Naga kills the mongoose also. Bait it gets bruised all over this time. Therefore, it skips its visits for a fortnight-"There was no sign of him the next fifteen days. Rani spent rights crying, wailing, and pining for him." Rani is in love with the Naga. She eagerly waits for him every night. "The smell of the blossoming of the nightqueen! How it fills the house before he comes! How it welcomes him! God, how it takes me, sets each fibre in me on fire!

Rani's pregnancy enrages Appanna:

In course of time Rani becomes pregnant. She is very happy to be a mother. She gives this news to the Naga but the Naga doesn't react like a happy father. Rani is surprised when the Naga asks her to hide her pregnancy as long as she can.

In the afternoon Appanna notices her inflated tummy. He is shocked beyond words. He calls her names and decides to go to the village Elders to get her punished for adultery.

Test of Rani's Chastity:

When she is brought before the Elders she is asked to hold a red hot iron bar in her hand to prove her chastity. The Naga realising her predicament, advises her to hold the king cobra instead. Viewing it as an equally convincing proof, the Elders agree to her proposal. On the appointed day, "she plunges her hand in the ant-hill and

pulls out the cobra. The cobra slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head. The crowd gasps. The cobra sways its hood gently for a while, then becomes docile and moves over her shoulder like a garland." The crowd is enchanted by this miracle and elevates Rani to the position of a Goddess-The crowd surges forward to prostrate it before her.

Rani is glorified:

Appanna is seated next to her in a palanquin, and the couple is taken in a procession to their house. Appanna is admonished "Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman. She is a goddess incarnate. Don't grieve that you judged her wrongly and treated her badly. This is how goddesses reveal themselves to the world. You were the chosen instrument for revealing her divinity." The Elder II exhorted him, "Spend the rest of your life in her service. You need merit in ten past lives to be chosen for such holy duty." Thus Rani became a goddess, too high to be the companion even of her husband.

Discomfiture of Rani and Appanna:

Rani has got her husband, but Appanna is distraught because he knows for certain that he has been cuckolded. He is non-plussed-"What am I to do? Is the whole world against me? Have I sinned so much that even nature should laugh at me? I know I haven't slept with my wife. Let the world say what it likes. Let any miracle declare her a goddess. But I know! What sense am I to make of my life if that is worth nothing?"

Rani also knows now that this real husband is different from the one that visited her every night. She must have felt shocked by the fraud done on her for so many nights continuously. "No two men make love alike. And that night of the village court, when her true husband climbed into bed with her, how could she fail to realize it was someone new? Even if she hadn't known earlier! When did the split take place? Every night this conundrum must have spread its hood out at her. Don't you think she must have cried out in anguish to know the answer?"

Naga gets shelter in Rani's tresses:

The snake is also disconcerted to see his beloved lying in the arms of some other man. It thinks it should kill the woman for her infidelity, but the intensity of its love renders him fangless-"Rani! My queen! The fragrance of my nights! The blossom of my dreams! In another man's arms? In another man's bed? Does she curl around him as passionately every night now? And dig her nails into his back? Bite his lips? And here I am-a sloughed off skin on the tip of a thorn. An empty sac of snake-skin. No, I can't bear this. Someone must die. Why shouldn't I kill her? If I bury my teeth into her breast now, she will be mine-mine forever. (Moves to her swiftly. But stops)."

But sobriety soon returns. He finds he cannot kill his beloved-"My love has stitched up my lips. Pulled out my fangs. Torn out my sac of poison. Yes, this king cobra is now no better than a grass snake...A grass snake. A common reptile. That's what I am, and I had forgotten that. I thought I could become human. Turn into my own creation." Thus his reasoning pacified his raging jealousy. He now decides that he will have nothing to do with her thighs and her bosom and her lips any more and will assume as small a shape as her tresses to hide in them and play with them. The cobra gets entangled in her tresses and dies. Rani persuades Appanna to cremate the cobra according to the rites. She also makes Appanna agree to her proposal that her son should perform the rituals every year on this day to commemorate the death of the Cobra.

But after sometime Rani again feels that there is some load on her head. As she combs her hair, a live snake falls to the ground. Appanna goes to get a stick to kill the snake, but in the meantime Rani lets her hair down to allow the snake to lie in her tresses for ever. Rani says to the Cobra, "Quick now Get it. Are you safely in sphere? Good. Now stay there. And lie still. You don't know how heavy you are. Let me get used to you, will you?" Thus Rani provides safe haven to the Cobra in her tresses

CHARACTER OF APPANNA

Introduction:

The story of Rani and Appanna is narrated by story itself. It is a story within a story. The narrator-story is born of a woman's mind which is strongly agitated due to her suspicion that her husband is carrying affairs with some other woman. Therefore, Rani and Appanna's story is not of any particular couple, it is rather a story of mis-matched man and woman.

Mis-matched Marriage:

The writer says that Rani is married to a man who does not have any particular name-"Well, any common name will do." The man is named Appanna. The parents of Rani had only these considerations in arranging this marriage-"The youngman was rich and his parents were both dead." Indian parents feel satisfied if they succeed in finding rich boys for their daughters perhaps because they find that earning one's livelihood is terribly difficult and their daughter will live in comforts with her rich husband, forgetting that the emotional comforts which proceed from happy marital relations are far more important.

An Adulterer:

Rich Appanna has no interest in Rani. He is interested in a concubine. As his parents are already dead, there is nobody to tell him what the difference between a wife and a concubine is. In Christopher Marlowe's "*Doctor Faustus*" Devil tells

Faustus that he should not think of getting a wife if he loves him, implying that wife is given by God through a religious process. The devil, however, promises Dr. Faustus that he can get him a woman. Appanna is ignorant of this basic principle of life because there is none to tell it to him in the absence of his parents. He is a youth that has gone astray.

Persecutes his Wife:

As Appanna is bewitched by the concubine, he fails to see that Rani is young and beautiful, and that she is the "Queen of long tresses." He claps her under lock and key, and tells her that he would come every day only for lunch which she should keep ready for him. It is a blow from the blue. All the dreams of a young bride are shattered in a jiffy. He becomes so cruel that Rani loses her equilibrium. She has only dreams left which haunt her day and night. She gets hallucinations the middle-aged woman of the Prologue.

Male Chauvinism:

He is an example of male Chauvinism. He goes to the concubine but keeps his wife under lock and key lest she should also get a love. He fails to realise that love knows no barriers. In spite of his vigilance, Kurudavva meets her. Naga comes to her through drains and crevice. It is due to his failure to love his wife that Naga manages to court Rani and Rani fails to unravel the mystery of the contradictory behaviours of the two Appannas due to her craving for love. She had some doubts in the initial stages but Naga managed to win her confidence by ingenuity. The clear message is that if neglected or deserted wives easily fall into the trap of anybody that makes advances.

Rani's Pregnancy Shocks him:

Appanna is shocked to notice that Rani is pregnant in spite of all the restraints that he had imposed upon her movements. The stories of Arabian Knights tell us that the lovers have very subtle ways to hoodwink 'the guards, and defy the barriers'. They can cross a gurgling river and used a snake as a rope to climb to the balcony of the beloved. Rani's movements are restricted that the lover has several entry points. Naga slithers into Rani's bedroom all unnoticed.

Threatens to take her to the village Elders:

The shocked husband with Hindu concept of chastity and satitwa is out of himself. He charges her with the offences of adultery and perjury-"Tell me who it is? Who did you go to with your sari off? You haven't? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, your slut-!" Chauvinistic husband takes her to the village Elders who ask her to hold a red-hot

iron bar to prove her innocence, though the Elders know well that Appanna himself is an adulterer. The male dominated society does not even take cognizance of the offence done by the husband, but asks the wife to take the acid test.

His Remorse:

Thanks to her lover Naga that comes to her rescue in her critical power. Rani passes the test, but it does not, as it cannot, remove the doubts of Appanna. He knows for certain that Rani's child is not born of him. This idea torments him. Though he is exhorted by the village Elders to "spend your life in her service. You need merit in ten past lives to be chosen for such holy duty", he raves, "What am I to do? Is the whole world against me? Have I sinned so much that even Nature should laugh at me? I know I have not slept with my wife. Let the world say what it likes. Let any miracle declare her goddess. But I know! what sense am I to make of my life that's worth nothing?"

A Cuckold:

Among Hindus it is the greatest torment to a man if he knows for certain as does Appanna that his wife is an adulteress. Appanna's case is worse. He has to serve Rani the whole life in spite of his knowledge that she has copulated with somebody else. It is like living in hell.

Nemesis:

Appanna who is not any particular person but a representative of chauvinistic males has to get the nemesis in the end. By all standards of judgement Appanna is condemned to live in hell fire for all of his life, without any hope of redemption.

The man who is sentenced to remain awake one full night on the pain of death is happy that Appanna's story has saved his life. Nobody expresses sympathy with poor Appanna. Can the contrary he is further mocked at by Rani as she tells him, "When we cremate this snake, the fire should be lit by our son", and "every year on this day, our son should perform the rituals to commemorate its death", confirming that the snake is the real father of her son. And poor Appanna has to say nothing but, "Of course, there is no question of saying no. You are the goddess herself incarnate. Any wish of yours will be carried out."

A cuckolded husband, having the knowledge of being one, is forced to treat his wife as a goddess and to carry out every wish of hers. Appanna's damnation to hell fire must exhort the wise never to persecute a goodly wife.

CHARACTER OF RANI

Marriage with an Adulterer:

Rani is the main woman character of the play, if not the heroine of the play. She bears all the tyrannies, yet she does not give up her values of life. She is the only child of her parents, and got their love in full measure. As happens with most of the Indian girls, the fond father finds a match for his daughter and marries her with Appanna, whose parents are already dead but he has money to spend and spare. As an Indian father generally thinks that a man is a good match for his daughter if he has means to provide wherewithal to his daughter. The poor fathers never bother about the character of the men with whom their daughters have to pass their lives. In cases innumerable men have turned out to be libertines and adulterers, but who can help when the society is ridden with poverty and the question of subsistence overshadows all other considerations.

Life of a Deserted Wife:

Appanna, being rich, goes to a concubine who has bewitched him to the extent that he fails to see the beauty of his wife and also to perform his role of a husband. Instead he becomes a jailor to his wife. From day one he locks her in his house with the command that he would come to the house only for his lunch which she would prepare punctually and regularly and would not ask any questions. Rani is shocked but has to accept the order.

Lives in a Solitary Cell:

She becomes a maidservant or even worse in her own house. She keeps Appanna's house. She sweeps, mops the floor, scrubs utensils and cooks food and obeys commands for a square meal a day. She tells Kurudavva "that her husband speaks to her only in syllables such as 'Do this', 'Do that', 'Serve the food. As she is locked in the house, she is not able to meet anybody, narrating her tale of woe; she tells Kurudavva-"Apart from him, you are the first person I have seen since coming here. I'm bored to death. There is no one to talk to!" It is clear that there is no companionship or love between her and Appanna. To add to her woes, she is timid as young girls generally are, with the result that she fails to get sleep at night-"I am so frightened at night, I can't sleep a wink. At home, I sleep between father and mother."

Sincerity and Love for a Tyrant Husband:

In spite of this persecution she does not want any harm should to Appanna. Kurudavva gives her roots which, as she has said, will come get her love of Appanna if it is given to him in his food. The small piece she gives makes Appanna sick. Therefore, she does not give the bigger piece to him lest it should do any serious

harm to him. Though Kurudavva has said with confidence that this will certainly bring him back to her, "Go in. Start grinding it. Make a tasty curry. Mix the paste in it. Let him taste a spoonful and he will be your slave." But Rani does not take any risk even to get the love of her husband. Rani is after all a model Indian wife who will bear the tyrannies inflicted by her husband, yet the husband is to served will all sincerity. Appanna keeps her as a slave, yet he is her dear husband and has to be kept out of the harm's way. The marriage rites, seven rounds around the fire, makes the husband master of his wife, but wife does not get any rights.

In Love with Cobra:

She prepares the paste, but instead of giving to her husband, she pours it into the ant's hill wherein lives a Cobra, which is proverbial for venomous deeds. This root turns a Cobra into a lover, but fails to inspire love in the heart of Appanna. Cobra assumes Appanna's shape and makes love with Rani every night. This change in Appanna surprises Rani as to how man who is so cruel in the day becomes so sincere a lover at night. But she accepts it as a part of life. In day time Appanna brings a dog to keep even Kurudavva away from Rani and then he brings as mongoose to keep the snake away but at night the same Appanna becomes a romantic lover. She tries to know from Naga why he changes like a chameleon in day time, but Naga tells her not to try to unravel the mystery. Rani has no option but to accept it. She says pathetically, "No, I won't. The pig, the whale, the eagle-none of them asks why. So I won't either. But they ask for it again. So I can too, can't I?"

Joy of Motherhood:

In course of time, Rani becomes pregnant. It is a news of joy for her as it is fulfilment of a woman's dream. She wants to share her joy with her husband but Naga becomes apprehensive instead. His cold bloodedness makes her tizzy-"I thought you would dance with joy on hearing the news. That you would whirl me around and fondle me. Feel my stomach gently and kiss me. All That-Actually, I was also afraid you might not do anything of that sort. That's why I hid the news from you all these months. I can't make any sense of you even when it is just the two of us... you are not happy about the baby. You are not proud that I am going to be a mother." Thus, Rani misses the joy of being a mother for the first time. Naga advises her to keep it a secret because he knows that this news will enrage Appanna.

She has to prove her innocence:

When Appanna comes to know of her pregnancy, he accuses her of infidelity, since he knows 'that he has never made love with her. He is out of himself, calls her a strumpet, a whore, drags her out of the house, threatens to give her extreme punishment for her adulterous conduct-"Aren't you ashamed to admit it, your harlot? I locked you in and yet you managed to find a lover!... I swear to you I am not my

father's son, if I don't abort that bastard! smash it into dust! --- I will go to the Village Elders. If they don't throw that child into boiling and you along with it, my name is not Appanna." This is how she is greeted for her first pregnancy.

Social Ostracism:

Rani must have been amazed by the contradictory behaviour of the same man. He loves at night and curses her in day. Naga cannot reveal his identity. Therefore, the most that he can do is to come to her rescue during her trial and acid test of her innocence. He therefore advises her to accept the snake ordeal-"when you face the Elders, tell them you will prove your innocence. Say you will undertake the snake ordeal" And Naga helps her out of her predicament. When she holds the Cobra in her hand, it "moves over her shoulder like a garment", and "spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head." Now Rani becomes a goddess and Appanna is exhorted by the Elders to spend "the rest of his life in her service." A woman in Indian society has to undertake such trials, no matter that her husband passes his nights with concubines and prostitutes.

The woman is dragged out of the house, but man goes uncensured This social injustice of the male-dominated society is exposed and poetic justice is done to Rani.

Self-reproach:

But the post-ordeal part of Rani's life is equally tortuous. The behaviour of Appanna makes it clear to her that she gets the child from some other man who came to her in the guise of Appanna-"No two men make love alike." Rani, being an Indian woman, is repentant for having relation with a man other than her husband. It is no matter that she had done it unknowingly and also that her husband also had illicit relations with a concubine. She holds herself guilty of adultery, though guiltless she is like Ahilya of yore who was made free of the stigma by Lord Rama, but this Ahilya has nobody to declare her a chaste woman.

Conclusion:

Rani is a typical Indian woman who is ready to suffer at the hands of her husband without complaining in the hope that husband will return to her in the end. She expects nothing, yet she is ready to make a sacrifice. If she comes to commit a mistake, she holds herself guilty and ever remains repentant for the lapse. It will not be amiss to say that an Indian or rather a Hindu wife is masochistic, taking pleasure in being tormented by the husband. She never revolts even in thought. After a husband according to Indian mythology is a replica of God howsoever depraved the husband be. Rani suffers at the hands of Appanna yet Rani does not take any risk even to gain the love of her husband. This attitude suppresses the personality of

Hindu wives. Rani's character typifies Hindu wife that accepts sufferings as fait accompli.

CHARACTER OF NAGA

Introduction:

Snakes are said to have nothing but poison in their fangs, though in myths they are said to have power to assume human shape at will and to do improbable feats of power and love. Without trying to know the reality of the myths, let us suspend our disbelief for a while to appreciate the theme of this play

Naga's entry in the life of Rani:

Naga comes into the life of Rani all by chance, Rani is incarcerated and presented by Appanna. Kurudavva takes pity on her. She gives a root, which according to her own experience, has the power to arouse love in the heart of anybody. Rani tries this root on Appanna, but she finds to her discomfiture that her husband is allergic to it. He starts vomiting and is saved with great difficulty-"He drinks it in a single gulp. Hands the glass back to her, goes to the door, ready to put the lock on. She watches him intently. He tries to shut the door. Suddenly clutches his head, Slides down to the floor, and goes to sleep on the door step, half inside and half outside the door." It is with great effort of Rani that he recovers. Rani fails to sum up courage to administer a second dose to him against Kurudavva's persuasion to do it. She pours out the second dose on the ants' hill in which there lives a Cobra. The Cobra licks the concoction and lo! it falls in love with Rani. Thus came the Naga in Rani's life. The obvious message of the story is that such men as are impervious to love are worse than a Cobra.

Naga in the shape of Appanna:

The Naga assumes the shape of Appanna because he knows that love of any man other than the husband's is anathema to a Hindu wife. But the Naga also knows that it will be difficult for him to win Rani's love even in the shape of Appanna. Therefore, he proceeds tactfully and with restraint to win Rani's love. He sits away from her and says and sit there, Away from you. Will you at least sit then? Then he flatters her with such remarks as "You are very beautiful. Then he expresses sympathy with her with such queries as "Did it hurt beating this morning and "You must be missing your parents." He asks, "How long is it since you had a good night's sleep." Such remarks and queries to give courage to Rani give up her taciturnity. Thus Naga goes step by step to be befriend Rani and finally succeeds immensely. Rani snubs for saying that he will stop coming to her at night-"Why do you tell me like this? I am sick of being alone. And then tonight I was terrified you might not come-

that what I remembered from last night may be just a dream. I was desperate that you should come again tonight.

Naga's love for Rani:

Naga loves Rani passionately, sincerely and truly. Appanna brings a dog to keep sympathetic visitors like Kurudavva away from Rani. It barks the whole night to deny to Rani even a wink of sleep. Rani complains to Naga, "Today this wretched dog has been barking since it was brought here. That is why I was doing when you came here." The lover Naga cannot bear tyrannies inflicted upon his beloved. He therefore, promises "That won't do any more." According to his promise he comes out of the ant hill and enters the darkened front yard of the house. He fights with the dog and kills it. He comes wounded all over like a hero that fights to win the hand of the heroine. Appanna is furious to see that the dog has been killed by the snake. He brings a mongoose, but the mongoose lasts only a day. The obstacle in the way to his beloved is to be removed by all means "But it had evidently given a tougher fight its mouth was full of blood. There were bits of flesh under its claws. Bits of snake skin were found in its teeth." Thus Naga gives convincing and clinching evidence of his love for Rani.

Naga's Love changes the character of Rani:

His love changes the character of Rani, as she also loves him. She applies ointment on his wounds and conceives from him. She becomes a complete woman as she tells him, "I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot, not a cat or a sparrow. Why don't you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me? Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a Chameleon from day to night? Love of Naga has made Rani bold enough to demand an explanation from her husband.

Contrast between Naga and Appanna:

As we know there are two Appannas in the story-a real and a feigned one. The real Appanna is angry to notice that Rani is pregnant. He charges her with adultery and threatens her that he will take her to the Elders of the village, but Naga wants to protect her from humiliation He comes to her rescue. The village Elders ask Rani to hold a red bar in her hands to prove her chastity. Rani promises to hold the Cobra instead in her hand, because Naga has assured that no harm will come to her if she does so. As the village Elders agree to it, she holds the cobra in her hand tremulously before all, and the Cobra gives her full honour-"The Cobra slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head.....The Cobra sways its hood gently for a while, then becomes docile and moves over her shoulder like a garland." The public is charmed by this view and declares that Rani is a goddess and Appanna, the

tyrant, is exhorted to serve her all his life-"Spend the rest of your life in her service. You need merit in ten past lives to be chosen for such holy duty." It is the nemesis for persecuting his wife and victory of love over hatred. But Naga and Appanna stand contrast to each other. One is perpetrating tyranny, while the other protects her and glorifies her.

Naga reconciles:

Rani gets her husband and a child but Naga loses his beloved. In the beginning he is jealous of Appanna because being a true lover he cannot bear to see his beloved being loved by any other man-"Rani! My queen! The fragrance of nights! The blossom of my dreams! In another man's arms? In another man's bed? Does she curl around him as passionately every night now? And her nails into his back? Bite his lips?" But he soon composes himself. He realises that Rani is meant for man, not for a "snake-"No her thighs, her bosom, her lips are for one who is ever a man. I shed my skin every season. How could I even hope to retain the human form?" Naga has the wisdom not to disturb the family life of Rani now when she has got her husband to serve her.

Poetic justice:

Naga comes in the life of Rani to save her from the tyrannies of Appanna and goes out of her life when his mission is fulfilled. The author has glorified Naga, made him a lover because he wants to give the message to all and sundry that a loving Naga is better than a tyrant man. Naga is duly rewarded for the noble service he has rendered to Rani and the society in general. Naga is not abandoned. On being killed by Appanna, he is given the honour due to a father. Rani insists that her son should perform the rituals every year to commemorate his death. But it again incarnates itself and Rani shelters it in her tresses. Thus Naga finds his haven in the tresses of his beloved. Thus poetic justice is done to Naga and Appanna.

Narrative Technique in *Naga-Mandala*.

The technique of making use of myths and folk forms enriches the play and provides a probe into the socio-cultural practices of the society. In *Naga-Mandala* 'story' as a technique is employed to narrate to a playwright the story of Rani. Story is portrayed as a woman. M. Sarat Babu, Indian film actor, mentions her as, "the Bhagavata of *Naga-Mandala*, a modified version of Yakshagana (folk theatre of Karnataka)." (Sarat, 238).

Speaking of the narratives included by Karnad in *Naga-Mandala* Rita Kothari, the Gujarati author says:

“The story suggests that the man fills in some details and in this way points to a very fundamental feature of all narratives they are formed, modified and mediated in the process of communication. The play calls for destroying all boundaries, including those between the author and the reader, the read text and the heard performance.” (Rita, 63).

Such narratives are used to interrogate and deal with conflicts in the society. Rita Kothari asserts:

“Closures seal possibilities and closed narratives become oppressive. Karnad prisms them open to show fissures and to facilitate an articulation of conflicts.” (Rita, 64).

Indian society with its rules and regulations is portrayed through the dialogues. The conversation between Appanna and his newlywed wife Rani during the meal:

Rani: Listen - (Fumbling for words) Listen - I feel frightened -alone at night.

Appanna: What is there to be scared of? Just keep to yourself. No one will bother you. Rice!

Rani: Please, you could –

Appanna: Look, I don't like idle chatter. Don't question me. Do as you are told and you won't be punished. (Finishes his meal, gets up) I'll be back tomorrow for lunch.” (*Naga-Mandala*, Act One, P.7).

In order to depict Rani's loneliness her day-dream is portrayed where she recalls her favourite nursery tale and imagines an eagle taking her to her parents who caress her affectionately. The scene shifts add texture to the play. Kurudavva is a character introduced by Karnad who guides Rani towards maturity. She gives Rani roots and advises her to grind it into a fine paste and mix it into Appanna's food. Naga, a king Cobra consumes it as Rani afraid pours it into the ant hill. Naga takes the form of Appanna and starts visiting her. Then Rani enjoys his company and then onwards night and day has a different story. Appanna's duality can be viewed in the dialogues between Naga and Rani.

Rani: You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a.... stupid snake. (Naga laughs). It's all very well for you to laugh. I feel like crying.

Naga: What should I do then.... stop coming at night? Or during the day.

Rani: Who am I to tell you that? It's your house. Your pleasure.

Naga: No, let's say, the husband decides on the day visits. And the wife decides on the night visits. So I won't come at night if you don't want me to. ((*Naga-Mandala*, Act Two, p.22).

The dialogues speak of the women's fear, psychological traits and the traditional Indian roles. Santosh Gupta, the film director, opines:

“Sudhir Kakar, the Indian psychoanalysts, finds that these factors make it difficult for social scientists to gain insight into women's psychological inner being. It is a remarkable achievement of Karnad's play that he adapts this 'man-oriented' folk tale in such a manner that it becomes a representation of the experience of man and woman in the psychologically transitional phase.” (Santosh, 250).

The flames gathering in a temple is a brilliant technique by Karnad which represents women gathering at home or at some places and speaking of their own stories. Santosh Gupta observes:

“The female experience expressed in female narratives is woven within the folk tale as the “flame” tells her story to the professional, male playwright.” (Santosh, 251).

The point of view of women is expressed which deals with her openness only when confronted with compassion and love. The creation of a feminized form is an exemplary art by an artist like Karnad. According to Girish Karnad: “The energy of folk theatre come from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them, literally stand on their head. The various conventions – the chorus, the mask, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and non-human worlds - permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem.

The use of the chorus and music and the songs sung by the Flames and the shape shifting are the various techniques intellectually woven by Karnad. The story comes out from the old woman's mouth wears a sari and walks out. Here the technique is introduced to convey the message that stories should not be confined to oneself. The

non-naturalistic techniques of ancient India are focused. The title of the play is not human but of a snake.

Man-Woman Relationship: *Naga-Mandala*

Karnada's plays are particularly concerned with the psychological problems, dilemmas and conflict experienced by the modern Indian men and women in their different social situations. His play *Naga - Mandala* is a powerful portrait of the agony and anguish faced by both men and women in their development into adult roles and social adjustment in a society where the individual is given little space for self development, awareness and independence as being.

The play *Naga-Mandala* offers a study in the patriarchal horse of the traditional families. Karnad observes: "The position of Rani in the story of *Naga- Mandala*, for instance, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband in two unconnected roles - as a stranger during the day and as a lover at night... the empty house Rani is locked in could be the family she is married to."

Although *Naga-Mandala* is based on folk tale, it also evinces the influence of Western playwright Bertolt Brecht and Jean Anouilh who delved into classical stories of other cultures and retold them in western context. Although the folk theatre derives its energy from traditional values, it also has the capacity to question them. It thus simultaneously presents alternative points of view and attitudes to the cultural problems.

The play *Naga-Mandala* is enacted in a temple at night, in the presence of three naked flames, in front of a man cursed to die within the next few hours, for writing plays that caused people to fall asleep twisted in miserable chairs. The play is about Rani, the Queen of long tresses, whose hair tied up in a knot looks as though a black King Cobra is curled on the nape of her neck. Rani's husband Appanna, proud and jealous, ill- treats her, coming home only for lunch and staying away with a concubine at night.

In *Naga- Mandala*, the human and non-human world enters into another's lives to reveal the playwright's vision of reality. Kurudavva, the best friend of Appanna's mother, gives a piece of root to give it to her husband to win him over. As the first piece fails, Kurudavva gave Rani the second piece which she grinds into a paste. When the paste prepared from root is boiled in a curry, it turns red as a brook. Rani

horrified at the sight of the food throw it into the ant-hill d the King Cobra, who lives there, eats the food. A King Cobra, called Naga, consumes the aphrodisiac paste and falls in love with Rani. He assumes the form of Appanna and visits Rani at night. He takes pity on Rani for her pathetic condition and showers parental affection on her. All her pent-up sorrow bursts out. Karnad put this in the form of dialogue:

Naga: Did it hurt... the beating this morning?

Rani: No.

Naga: Locked up in the house all day... You must be missing your parents.

Rani: (Struggles to hold back a sob) No.

Naga: They doted on you, didn't they?

(She suddenly bursts out into a fit of weeping) ...

(Startled) What is it?

(Rani continues to howl.)

I know, you want to see your parents, don't you? All right. I'll arrange that.

(She looks at him dumbfounded)

Truly. Now. Smile, Just a bit. Look. I'll send to them only if you smile now.

(Rani tries to smile. A new out burst of barking from the dog.) (Act two, P. 19-20)

Rani cannot comprehend the situation since Appanna cannot be so affectionate and compassionate. Yet she willingly suspends her disbelief and enjoys the concern and affection of Naga who is in the guise of Appanna. She feels happy and secure in his company. She becomes bold enough to talk to him and falls asleep in his embrace. Naga is happy about his success. He lays her gently down on the bed. He becomes cobra and leaves.

Appanna comes in the morning next day. He unlocks the door and steps in. Rani comes out running and laughing obviously thinking that her hardships have ended as Appanna has changed for better. She learns that she is wrong.

Rani: But when did you go away? I'm. (Freezes when she sees an expression of distaste on his face)

Appanna: Yes?

Rani: Oh! Nothing. (Act Two, P. 21)

Rani thus becomes rigid again. As usual, after lunch, Appanna leaves. It gets dark. Naga comes out of the ant-hill and fights with the dog. He kills the dog to stop the disturbance to Rani's sleep but gets injured in the fight. Then he enters the house through the drain and assumes the form of Appanna. He washes his blood in the bath room and comes in. He sees Rani, smiles and sits on her bed. She closes her eyes and opens them. Then she bites her finger and gives a cry of pain. She is not sure whether she is dreaming the gentleness and warmth of Naga (Appanna to her) incomprehensible to her. Karnad remarks:

(To herself.) His visit last night - I assumed, I must have dreamt that. I am certainly not dreaming now. Which means I am going mad? Spending the whole day by myself in rotting my brain.

Then Naga assures her that what she sees is real, not a figment of her imagination. He asks her to tell about herself and her parents. On the other hand, Rani expresses her doubt about him. She cannot understand why Appanna so nice at night is rough and rude hissing like a stupid snake during the day. Karnad has put the dialogue between Rani and Naga in this way:

Rani: You talk so nicely at night, but during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a--- stupid snake. (Naga laughs) it's all very well for you to laugh. I fell like crying

Naga: What should I do than ----stop coming at night? or during the day.

Rani: Who am I to tell you that? It's your house. Your pleasure.

Naga: No, let's say, the husband decides on the day visits. And the wife decides on the night visits So I won't come at night if you don't want me to.

Rani feels sorrowful and says that she can say nothing if he spins riddles like this. Naga knows that his identity will be revealed unless he suppresses her reason and intuition by patriarchal authority:

Naga: (Seriously) I am afraid that is how it is going to be. Like that during the day. Like this at night. Don't ask me why?

Rani: I won't. (Act Two, P. 22-23)

This shows how the men of patriarchal culture suppress the intellect of women and how their ignorance gives men the freedom of doing whatever they like. These male chauvinists are able to prove that women are foolish and ignorant. This injunction of Naga proves to be so powerful that Rani does not know the real identity of Naga until Appanna sleeps with her. Appanna gets furious when Rani is pregnant. The village elders sit in judgement and Rani swears that she has not touched anyone except her husband and the Cobra, nor has she allowed any male to touch her. Rani says "If I lie, let the Cobra bite me." The Cobra does not bite her, but slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over the head. The crowd is stunned, while the Elders declare her a Devi, a divine being. Appanna, too, asking her forgiveness takes her fondly into his arms. Rani gives birth to a beautiful son, but Appanna is aware that he is the father of the child. The Cobra, unable to bear separation, ties a stress on Rani's hair round its neck and strangles its death hiding in her hair. The dead Cobra falls to the ground when Appanna combs hair. Rani, who now understands about the Cobra, wishes him to be cremated by their son and rite to be performed to commemorate the Cobra's death. Appanna agrees to the wishes to Rani as he regards her goddess incarnate. Events have meanings only in relation to persons.

Marriage as a Patriarchal Institution:

Naga-Mandala also poses some very relevant questions regarding the institution of marriage as it exists in India. We are introduced to Appanna who has brought home a wife but continues to visit a harlot. He leaves home after lunch every day and returns only for lunch the next day. The two are psychologically and physically mismatched. Appanna, with his regular visits to concubines finds his inexperienced new wife uninteresting and leaves her every day to herself locked in the house alone. Rani is totally ignorant about sex and so the only bond that exists between newlyweds is absent in the case of Rani and Appanna. The absence of this bond renders the marriage meaningless and Rani is reduced to the status of a housemaid who must cook for her husband and feed him every afternoon. The prince of whom she had dreamt, who was to bring her to his house turns into a demon. There is no chance of return to freedom and she is inescapably trapped. She quakes to think of her fate in case of Appanna's death. Expressing her love for Appanna, Rani feels: "Suppose something happens to my husband?" she ponders "a little piece made him ill. Who knows...?"

Transformations of the Role of Characters:

Transformation is a recurring feature in myths, legends and folk tales of most cultures. *The Bible, the Epics and the Puranas* are replete with it. A man transforms into a statue, a crane, a woman, a bird or a wolf. This metamorphosis can be caused by the object changed or by an external force; it can take place for a good or an evil cause or for reasons simple or profound. It is not possible to assign shape shifting a universal waning because of "the rich variety of contexts and levels of subtlety in which it is found.

Towards the end of the play, Rani and Appanna both are transformed characters. Rani is the very image of an ideal plan woman-demure, unquestioning and uncomplaining. She is a simple, innocent and ignorant girl. She has grown physically but not matured mentally. She behaves as a frightened child in the presence of Appanna. She grows as she receives the affection of Naga. She, a little helpless diffident girl, gradually becomes a confident and courageous lady. At the end of the play, she emerges from a very weak, frail archetypal Indian woman to an extremely bold person knowing the ways of the world. When Naga orders her not to ask questions, she obeys him till she gets pregnant. Only when she is to become a mother she realizes the grave injustice of the entire situation. In one of her speeches, Rani asserts her self to impress upon Naga that she is now a different person and would not allow herself to be ordered about as 'Do this', 'Do That', 'Don't ask questions etc. This can be seen Act II of *Naga- Mandala*; Rani speaks:

“I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don't you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me? Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a chameleon from day to night? Even if I understood a little, a tiny bit - I could bear it. But now - sometimes I feel my head is going to burst.”

Appanna is taken a back when she snarls at him, “if you don't let me go, I'll—” “similarly Appanna also changes, accepted his wife's superiority and utters, “Forgive me. I am a sinner I was blind”

It is also clear that Rani is acceptable to her husband only as Goddess. She is to him a whore or a Goddess or nobody, to be kept under lock and key. The ordinary woman with normal desires i.e. Rani as she is - is rejected by him. Even the village

elders refuse to take her seriously till they get convinced that she is an 'avatara'. Marriage, in a society consisting of people like Appanna and the elders, will always remain a problem for they tend to look upon women as either whores or Goddesses and never as ordinary human beings.

In *Naga- Mandala*, we have two worlds- one internal and the other external. The internal world is that of the husband and the wife and external one consists of the husband and his friends and brothers and fathers and even concubines. There is always an attempt to keep the wife isolated and out of the picture of the external world. The husbands try to exert their monopoly over their wives in various ways and when they feel that they have failed to retain their absolute hold over their wives' physical and emotional selves they get emotionally charged and destructive. Sex, for this man is a tool, which can be used to avenge and take revenge.

Transformation is also related to the supernatural in *Naga- Mandala*. The crossing of boundaries is a perilous, even magical event. It might end in death or annihilation of the one who transgresses and it is he who must pay the heavy price. In the play, Naga dies once this transfiguration is revealed. He commits suicide and dies like a true lover in the tresses of Rani's hair. In perishing thus, he becomes a love's martyr and asserts the sublimity, purity and dignity of his love. Naga's suicide leads to the revelation on enlightening or Rani to an otherwise unnoticed reality. Now, she decided that the cobra should be cremated ritually and the fire should be lit by their son. Rani says, "our son should perform the rituals to commemorate its death." The play centers on rites and rituals. Naga, the Snake-God of Hindus, is invoked who fulfils the desires of his devotees, especially the wish for fertility. Naga through shape shifting gives everything Rani wishes for - a loyal husband, a life - long servant and a beautiful child. In this regard, Savita Goel (2000:114) says:

Transformation in characters is related to the supernatural. The crossing of boundaries is a perilous, even magical event. It might end in death or annihilation of the one who transgresses and it is he who must pay the heavy price. In the play, Naga dies once this transfiguration is revealed.

Theme of Betrayal:

The betrayal triangle in a situation of adultery can be represented as under:

(NAGA - RANI -' APPANNA.)

The play can be interpreted in accordance with the theme of betrayal at the following five levels:

- 1) **Husband Betrays his Wife**
- 2) **Wife Betrays her Husband**
- 3) **Supernatural Being Betrays the Couple**
- 4) **Son Betrays his Mother**
- 5) **Self-Betrayal**

Let us see how this theme of betrayal runs through the play and unites the characters and creates a fantastic dramatic effect.

1) Husband Betrays His Wife:

From the very first day of his marriage, Appanna locks his wife Rani and goes to visit his concubine. He considers his wife as an inanimate precious object, like gold or diamond. Therefore, everyday he comes in the afternoon and finds whether his property is safe or not. He does not consider her as a human being. He never bothers about her mind, feelings and passions. It is absurd on the part of Appanna to consider her as an inanimate object. When a person treats another person as an object for his selfish purpose, betrayal is the natural result. Another reason why he locks her in the room is that he wishes his extra-marital relations to remain undisturbed. He misleads Rani by pretending to be more protective. He conceals his illicit relations.

In a sense, he is a modern man who does not bother about social ethics and piety of marriage as an institution. He subverts the concept of domestic happiness. He behaves immorally and oppresses his wife unjustly. He orders her:

Look, I don't like idle chatter. Do as you are told; you understand? (finishes his meal, gets up.) I'll be back tomorrow, for lunch. (p-7)

Rani is left alone, all helpless and hopeless. Her pitiful days roll by in this manner. Appanna is indifferent to his lovely wife. He comes for lunch everyday mechanically, orders mechanically and treats her as a machine. He is an insensitive and insincere husband. He is a dominating person who flirts outside but separates his wife from social contacts. He gives Rani separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain and mental strain. One day old and blind Kurudawa, a close associate of Appanna's mother, comes to meet Rani. But Appanna becomes angry and warns her not to visit

his house again. Once he brings a ferocious dog and at another time a mongoose to prevent Rani from talking with others. Appanna is, thus, a persecutor and oppressor. Kappanna, Kurudawa's son, feels that Appanna should have been born a wild beast or reptile, but by some mistake he was born a human being. He can be everyman, a typical domineering husband who treats his wife inhumanly. He is a male chauvinist who is free from bondage and does whatever he likes. He considers himself superior to his wife. He betrays his wife but does not want to be questioned by her. He is a representative of a patriarchal culture where moral values are not associated with men. The village elders who sit in Rani's judgment are men. They never ask Appanna's fidelity towards his wife. They never object to his licentious behaviour. The concepts of fidelity, purity, morality, loyalty etc. have been the monopoly of women since the dawn of patriarchy. Appanna distrusts and destroys Rani's dreams of wedding bliss. She is totally disillusioned in the locked-up room. With the help of the aphrodisiac root, she tries an unsuccessful attempt to attract her husband.

2) Wife Betrays Her Husband:

There can be two different views about Rani's act of betrayal. One view defends her case stating that she is absolutely innocent of her sin. Another view can definitely hold her responsible for the act of betrayal by giving many evidences.

It can be proved that she deliberately neglects the facts of Naga's real identity. Let us consider both the views in details:

a) Wife Betrays Her Husband Inadvertently:

Rani is the centre of interest in the play. The whole plot revolves around the development of her personality. Rani is the only daughter who has been brought up in an orthodox family. Her parents loved her very much. Her's was a child marriage. From the very first day of her marriage, she becomes a passive victim in the hands of her husband. It is but natural that she feels tortured due to loneliness. She develops claustrophobia and it becomes unbearable to her. Under such loneliness she weaves mysterious stories. Her dreams express her longings. Her strong desire is to return to her parents. In a dream, an eagle carries her beyond the seven seas. In yet another vision, she feels the demon (Appanna) locking her up in his castle. It rains heavily and the sea floods the city. A large whale asks her to come out. She wishes to come out, but she doesn't do so. Rani is an extremely innocent and naive girl. Kurudavva, is perplexed to listen to Rani's innocent answers, when she asks Rani:

Has your husband touched you? How can I put it? (Exasperated.) Didn't anyone explain to you before your wedding? (p. 11)

Rani does not know the meaning of sex. Kurudavva is an oasis for Rani. Kurudavva feels sorry for Rani's plight so she gives Rani two pieces of aphrodisiac root and informs her to add it in Appanna's food. She tells Rani:

.... feed it to your husband and watch the results. Once he smells you he won't go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly, (p. 13)

Being unsuccessful with a small piece of the magical root, Rani mixes the second largest root and finds the curry turning 'blood-red'. As she thinks it is dangerous to feed Appanna with the mixture, she pours the liquid on the ant-hill where the King Cobra, a snake laps it up and falls in love with Rani. This is the turning point in her life. Her transformation begins along with Naga's transformation. The King-Cobra transforms himself into a human being and causes Rani's transformation deceitfully.

The cobra enters the house through the drain in the bathroom (symbolic of the union of two sexual organs) and with his magical power assumes the shape of Appanna, Rani's husband. Rani, at first, detests sex as a canine character. Intercourse is mean and sinful to her. But Naga delivers a long enchanting speech and satisfies his carnal desire. He provides her idyllic joy. For Rani, Naga is the wish-fulfilment husband. Though Rani inadvertently pours the mixture on the ant-hill, still it works on the snake. This inadvertence can defend Rani as an innocent victim of the magical root. If she had discovered the real identity of Naga she would not have allowed him to enter her bed-room. But there comes a crisis in Rani's life. She goes to bed with Naga unknowingly.

In *Naga-Mandala*, Appanna is left holding a child who is not his own. One cannot neglect the fact that Rani is the mother of a child not from her husband. Rani finds herself alone in this crisis because neither her omnipotent lover nor her husband provides her moral and emotional support. After all she bears an idea that she is wooed by another person. What answer will she give to her son in future? Society doesn't understand and accept such a negligent woman. People are always ready to blame a woman who gives birth to an illegitimate child. She is a sinner from their point of view.

ii) Wife as a sinner from the husband's (every man's) point of view:

At this juncture one vital question remains unsolved. Who is responsible for her inadvertent immoral act--the aphrodisiac magical root or Naga or Appanna or Rani herself? Therefore, it becomes essential to judge Rani's immoral act from her husband's (every man's) point of view.

With Karnad's dramatic technique, Naga and Appanna coalesce into the real husband Appanna. Time and relevance are the most important factors in a play. Karnad doesn't waste a single minute in making Rani confess her pregnancy to her husband. Both the roles of Appanna and Naga are performed by the same character. The light changes sharply from night to mid-day. In a flash Naga becomes Appanna. His ego is hurt. He pushes her to the floor and kicks her. He accuses Rani:

Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is. Who did you go to with your sari off? (p. 33)

He roars poignantly

You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut! (p.33)

He appeals to the village elders to sit in judgment and punish his wife severely for her adulterous sin.

Let us find out the possible evidences from the play. One cannot ignore that Rani gets an opportunity to come out of the house. She doesn't pour the mixture near the door-steps, but on the anthill. The paste accordingly works on the Cobra, Naga, after lapping the love potion, comes out of the anthill (Act I) In Hindu mythology a woman is considered as a gift of the land and when the land is in danger a snake comes to her help. Rani suffers from a solitary confinement. So she inadvertently invites the Cobra to rescue her. In most part of the Indian villages, there is a ritualistic practice amongst women of pouring milk on anthill on Nagulachaviti/ Nagapanchmi. V. Revati Rangan (1997:33) in this context tells us:

The snake-god in the Egyptian civilization is 'Rannath' the Rain god or the god of vegetation.

Cobra is the phallic symbol worshipped by unmarried girls in order to get good husbands and generally barren women in order to bear children. Rani gets only one opportunity to propitiate the King-Cobra and she successfully does her task.

In most cases we find that a woman is obedient to her husband. She is actually a victim of patriarchal culture. She meekly follows whatever is told to her. She has no right to question her husband. In Rani's case the situation is not different at all. She is told by Appanna that he would come only for lunch everyday. Why doesn't she suspect, at least once, that the nocturnal Appanna is not her husband but somebody else in the guise of Appanna?

When the first night gets over Naga goes to the bathroom, turns into his original form and slithers away. In the morning, Rani finds no trace of Naga visiting her and the door is still locked. She is just baffled. She has many opportunities to find out the fact. But she behaves negligently and allows the non-human entity to pollute her chastity. Next afternoon when her husband comes for lunch Rani asks him:

: But when did you go away? I'm, (Freezes when she sees the expression of distaste on his face.)

Appanna: *Yes?*

Rani: *Oh I Nothing, (p. 21)*

She at once realizes that some untoward incident had happened the previous night. So she immediately keeps mum and thus conceals her secret affair from Appanna. It is also remarkable that Rani always longs for an animal, a bird, a stag and a whale to liberate her. Finally, a snake arrives and provides her with whatever she desires.

It can be stated that every couple is familiar with each other's smell. As one's voice is one's identity, likewise each one of us has a distinct smell. Rani remains in the company of her husband every afternoon. Why couldn't she recognize her lover Naga's smell, which must be different from that of the real Appanna? Moreover, Naga is a cobra-snake. It can't shed its original smell. Rani fails to differentiate between the two smells which belong to two different worlds or is she deliberately ignoring it?

After killing the ferocious dog, Naga washes blood off his cheeks. Rani hears the footsteps but neglects the sound deliberately. Naga has injuries on his cheeks and shoulders. Therefore, she wants to apply ointment on the injuries. When she opens the mirror-box, she is perplexed and frightened to see the image of a Cobra-snake in the place of Naga. In the case of a snake, it is a myth that the mirror reflects its real

image. Rani must be knowing this myth, as her father had told her other myths. But this time Rani behaves in her usual manner. The next afternoon she doesn't find any injury or blood on her husband's cheeks and shoulders. She muses:

But last night... he had blood on his cheeks...and shoulders. Now... (p.29)

Even a simpleton woman can understand such a major difference. Rani notices this difference more clearly as the time goes by and her awareness of reality increases. Though she realizes the difference, she doesn't ask any question nor does she express any doubt about it. Appanna brings a mongoose because he realizes that the dog might have been killed by a cobra-snake. But Rani's lover is not an ordinary reptile. He kills the mongoose but gets severely injured and doesn't meet Rani for the next fifteen days. Rani spends her nights crying, wailing and pining for him. When he returns, his body is covered with wounds partly healed. But Rani finds no scars on Appanna's body. One can understand one's incapacity to comprehend the reality. But five months is not a brief period to make a fool of oneself. Moreover, it is not very difficult to understand that one man can be harsh during the day time and an affectionate lover during the night. She says:

You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a... stupid snake. (p.22)

She fails to seek an answer to the conundrum and doesn't wish to discover the truth. There are many instances in the play where Rani willingly suspends her disbelief and enjoys the pleasures that Naga offers her. She feels happy and secure in his night-time company. Regarding her present condition, Pranav Joshipura (1999:259) aptly remarks:

Moreover, the outcome of this situation applies to the fact that in this modern world the physical satisfaction is to be given high priority.

Rani is completely involved in erotic pleasures with her superman-lover. She wishes that the night last forever. She curses the chirping of the birds in the morning as they disturb her meeting with Naga. V. Revati Rangan (1997: 37) rightly describes Rani's feelings as:

Day is an un masker, but night brings masked delight.

She feels nervous when he goes out. The days roll by and after five months she realizes yet another transformation. She remains pregnant. It is but natural that her joy knows no bounds. She tells Naga:

...now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot, (p.32)

On her understanding of Naga's real identity, A. Jagan Mohana Chari (1999:236) says:

When exactly Rani perceives that the man who comes to her in the night is not her husband Appanna but the cobra in his shape is never the moot point here. The woman in her might have experienced it through and through—as the difference between love and authority of one and the same person, her husband.

Her act of adultery is a blow to patriarchal culture. She has shown that in spite of male chauvinist shackle, bondage, or a lock, woman can acquire whatever she aspires for. She just requires an opportunity. Girish Karnad has given a blow to the traditional concept of chastity which has been imposed only on women. His Rani proves her superiority over male section of the society. After the snake-ordeal she has been considered a Goddess, a divine being. All the villagers prostrate before her. Appanna and his concubine respect Rani's divinity. The snake-ordeal in order to prove her fidelity reminds us of Sita in the Ramavana, who had to pass through the test of fire to prove her fidelity.

From Appanna's point of view her oath that she had touched only two—her husband and this cobra is totally false. Appanna is absolutely sure that he had not touched his wife at all. But the miracle of the Cobra not biting his liar and faithless wife surprises him. Should he believe his own truth or the public truth? Appanna unwillingly accepts the false truth thrust upon him by the villagers. He is thus fooled, betrayed and is forced to accept the divinity of his unchaste wife. Rani gives birth to a beautiful child. Rani who was an artless and innocent girl, becomes a shrewd and trickster woman. Sativa Goel (2000:114) while expressing her opinion about Rani says:

Rani emerges from a very weak, frail woman to an extremely bold person knowing the ways of the world, now she occupies the highest position of the head of the family. She is elevated to the status of a living goddess, an object of veneration and worship.

Rani and Appanna find a small snake in the house. Rani recognizes her lover in the form of the snake. It's a shocking piece of treachery even to those who consider her as an innocent heroine. At this moment she betrays and misleads her husband. Appanna searches for a stick to kill the reptile. Rani, on the other hand, wants to protect it. She misdirects Appanna and asks him to look for the snake in the bathroom and behind the back, she makes the snake alter by saying:

He'll kill you. Go. Go away. No! Not that way. He's there...My hair! Of course. Come, quick. Climb into it... This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, forever, (p.45-46)

Rani pats her hair. It is a sheer treachery against the husband to protect the lover. Will you call such a woman: a trickster, a betrayer, a cheat or a loyal, sincere, divine goddess? Santosh Gupta (1999:254) rightly describes Rani's condition as:

The lover is always present; he lives with her within the family. The danger to make authority as a husband and patriarch lives on constantly at a closer quarter but mostly within the woman's imagination. The dutiful and loyal wife may observe the social, moral code entirely, yet within her live the memories of the perfect lover who had given her his first emotional and erotic experience.

Padmini in Karnad's *Hayavadana*, though a shrewd, talkative, witty heroine can't live with two men simultaneously. But Rani who is an innocent and artless girl successfully lives with her obedient husband and the superman-lover. She has paralysed her manly husband and made Naga just a harmless grass reptile. She has stitched up Naga's lips, pulled out his fangs and torn out his sack of poison. She plays a cunning game with both of them. She takes advantage of her superiority over male chauvinism. She forces Appanna to allow their son to commemorate Naga's death every year. Appanna is left with no alternative but to concede to it. It is rightly said that only the mother knows the real father of her child. Of this game of betrayal, Santosh Gupta (1999:254) rightly says:

The male assumption of keeping full control over the body, sexuality and virtue of women through the institution of family and values like chastity are mocked in the story, in the play, where the absent husband finds his substitute wooing his wife and taking his place, creating laughter.

Rani carries a lifelong heavy burden of disloyalty. She blackens the whole life of Appanna. He cannot be spared from his adulterous habits. Both have equal rights

at individual and social levels. Rani shows that she can also do whatever she likes to do. It seems that the institutions of marriage and family stand firmly on woman's sincerity and chastity. When the licentious persons viz. Appanna and his concubine have reformed themselves into good persons, it is pathetic that this good, innocent heroine becomes treacherous. Rani, easily gets a secluded place and an able bodied man to commit adultery. From the third night of her wedding, the super-human lover starts wooing her. She enjoys erotic pleasures with him every night. Hers is a sheer game of betrayal. Her whole story revolves round the game of deception and surprisingly enough she is awarded divinity.

3) *The Supernatural Being Betrays the Couple:*

Like his earlier play, Hayavadana, Girish Karnad titled his third English play Naga-Mandala after the name of a reptile, Naga. Naga is the centre of excitement and the source of conflict in the play. The playwright presents complex human and non-human relationship by introducing the character of Naga. Rani's pouring out the aphrodisiac mixture on the ant hill causes the emergence of King-Cobra. The snake falls in love with Rani. The play Naga-Mandala revolves around the secret love-making of Rani and her serpent lover. The serpent forms an important ingredient in most narratives all over the world. Martin S. Day (1999:276) in this connection states:

There exists a theory that the mothers of great men in history such as Scipio Africans, Alexander the great and Augustus Caesar were all impregnated by serpents.

Snakes are the symbols of human maleness and strength. Nagas are sometimes portrayed as handsome men, or as half man and half-snake, the upper half being the torso of a man, the lower half a coiled snake. The Bible, the Epics and the Puranas are packed with the transformation of animals into men and vice-versa. A man transforms into a statue, a crane, a woman, a bird, an apsara or a wolf and so on. Padma Malini Sundararaghavan (1998:27) explains the term 'mandala' thus:

The word 'Mandala' means a geometric pattern often set within a circle or a circle within a square. In rituals it assumes a magical significance possessing a power of shakti of its own—In magic the 'Mandala' implies protection.

In the play, Naga creates a protective circle around his beloved, Rani. Her transformation from an innocent girl into a mature mother within the circle is a

hallmark. The circle is so strong that even after the suicide of Naga, no one dares to break it or crush it down. It reminds us of Laxmana who draws a protective boundary line for Sita in the Ramayana.

Act II of the play begins with the entry of the intoxicated Naga who enters the room through the drainpipe in the bathroom. The snake assumes the form of Appanna, Rani's husband. As a divine being he knows Rani's longing for her parents. Like an ordinary lover, he fans her feelings by praising her beauty and lying to her that all arrangements will be made to take her to her parents. But he never takes her to her parents.

On the second night, Naga kills the watch dog. He lies to Rani that he had himself brought the dog and would come for lunch. He pretends that he is her real husband Appanna. He takes full advantage of her artless nature, her loneliness and her longing for Appanna of her dream. Naga is a shrewd and cunning lover. When Rani sees the reflection of a snake in the mirror instead of Naga, he quickly pulls her away from the mirror. He doesn't, at any cost, wish to disclose his identity. He is a vicious creature by nature. Therefore, whenever Rani asks more questions, Naga smothers her curiosity with more affection.

Thus Naga tries his utmost to make Rani a prey of his well-knit plan. For the time being one can agree with the fact that the love potion has induced him to woo Rani, but the potion has not induced him to transform into Appanna's personality. It is his own machination. He finds it easy to betray Rani by such disguise. He has committed the offence of impersonation.

Moreover, Naga knows that Rani is the wife of another man. He has committed the offence of adultery by seducing her. His evil intention is made clear by his entry through the drain pipe. He knows the window but he doesn't enter the room through it. He comes secretly at night and woos the wife of another person. He conceals his identity. Had Naga possessed an omnipotent power, he could have blessed Rani with a child without polluting her virginity as Kunti was blessed by Durvasa Rishi in the Mahabharata. Or he could have assumed the form of the most handsome God Madana whom no woman would have ever denied. Or he could have advised Appanna to go to Rani. Or he could have stung Appanna's concubine. There were many alternatives at his disposal. But alas! he behaves like an ordinary cheat and pollutes the virginity of a chaste girl.

Naga uses his hypnotic power to bring Rani under his spell. When Rani detests sex as a canine character, he gives a long speech on intercourse and expatiates the myth of natural life of which man is a part.

Naga explains to her that sex is natural and enjoyable but not sinful. He cites innumerable examples eloquently to justify love making. The sermon is so inspiring that Rani is mesmerised and she submits her chastity to the shrewd impostor Naga. He cures her shyness and frigidity. Naga, according to Maeder (2000:18) is a 'phallic' type of creature. He misleads the wife of another person for his sexual hunger. Naga tells Rani that he wants her to be fresh and bright every night. An innocent naive girl is seduced by a non-human entity. Rani becomes mad for her nocturnal lover. Naga's impersonation is reminiscent of the Ahilya-Indra episode in the Ramayana. Lord Indra desires to woo Ahilya, the wife of Gautama. So Indra impersonates as Gautama and woos Ahilya when the latter is away. Santosh Gupta (1999:255) in this context rightly points out:

The tremendous power of Eros in human life brings turmoil within the person and upsets the social life if it is denied proper recognition and expression,

Naga is so powerful that he kills his traditional rival, the mongoose. Generally, it is seen that a mongoose kills a snake. The mongoose would have killed Naga if he had an idea that the fighting was going on for a female partner. Naga is so badly injured that he couldn't meet her for fifteen days. He has already warned Rani not to ask any questions. Both her husband and her lover behave in the same manner. In this way, he woos her for about five months. It is disclosed that Rani is pregnant. Naga has transformed an innocent and artless girl into a full mature, artful and wily woman. Rani's pregnancy is a great shock to this sincere lover. One more trait of his personality comes out naturally. He is cold and indifferent to her pregnancy. It shows that he is a wicked and selfish entity. He enjoys sensual pleasures with her but at this critical situation he does not want to share the responsibility of the child. Once Rani suspiciously asks him:

Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a chameleon from day to night? Even if I understood a little, a tiny bit—/could bear it. (P'32)

Naga's physical appearance is that of Appanna, but his soul is that of a reptile. An animal takes care of its offspring for just a very short period. Naga is not at all happy with her pregnancy because her pregnancy could reveal his identity. He,

therefore, asks her to keep it a secret even from him (Appanna) as long as possible. Rani brilliantly comments on his Machiavellian character: *The face in the morning unrelated to the touch at night (p.32)*

Where is his magical power? Where is his omnipotent power? What is the use of his kingship of exile? His night-queen is left destitute because of his treacherous act. Rani has to undergo trial in order to prove her chastity. She asks him to poison her. His faithlessness is unbearable to her. So she rebukes him:

Isn't all this a result of trusting you? (suddenly helpless.) Who else is there for me? (p.34)

She can neither commit suicide nor abort an embryo of five months. She is left alone to face the calamity and defamation, as it always happens in a woman's case in our patriarchal system. She is defamed publicly by her husband and the villagers. Naga poisons the lifelong tie between the husband and the wife. In spite of his adultery his hypocrisy, his lying, his deceitful act and his immoral relations with Rani we can't neglect his sincerity towards his beloved. He realises the obscenity of his act but is helpless. He has his natural limitations. It is due to his secret affair that Rani is defamed. Therefore, he comes to her help. Firstly, he advises her that ordeal can't be avoided. He knows that he is a totem for the Hindus. He respects his devotees and social traditions. So he advises her to go for the snake-ordeal and to speak only the truth. He warns that if she tells a lie, the cobra would bite her. Secondly, when Appanna tries to throw a huge stone at her to abort, the cobra comes out of the ant-hill and hisses at him. Appanna throws a stone at the cobra but it escapes at once. Thus, Naga comes forth and saves Rani. As per his advice Rani undergoes the snake trial and is considered a goddess. Rani is regarded a deity after the snake-ordeal (Act II) Rani gets back her reformed husband, a maid servant and a beautiful child. She is revered by the villagers.

The Naga's promise:

Your husband will become your slave tomorrow. You will get all you have ever wanted, (p.35) is fulfilled.

Naga thus brings happiness and glory to Rani. He restores her with happiness and compensates his deceitful act. He robs her of virginity and re-compensates her with the material happiness. His impersonation, his lying, his misleading temptations, his wooing her and finally his suicide have given the play an interesting

and thrilling spirit and contemporary context. Every lover and his beloved behave in the same manner and use many tactics on the sly that Naga has used to woo Rani secretly. Both Naga and Rani acquire stealthily what they initially needed. Naga's sexual hunger reminds us of Hemmela in Kambar's Jokumaraswami (1989:4) who asks:

Tell me, why is this god always after women?

4) Self-Betrayal

Though Appanna is a despot and an insincere demon, he is thoroughly shattered when he realizes that Rani is pregnant. He hasn't touched her, yet he has to accept her son. Her oath that she touched her husband and the king cobra, is not true from Appanna's point of view. Rani is acclaimed a Goddess. The Elders tell Appanna:

Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman. She is a goddess incarnate... You were the chosen instrument for revealing her divinity. (p.40)

He falls at her feet and begs her pardon. He becomes her devoted husband and his concubine feels happy to serve Rani. Thus the persecutor becomes the rescuer and finally a miserable victim. Rani's infidelity can be regarded as poetic justice or retribution to Appanna's licentious act. The beloved and her lover are happy but Appanna's anguished state remains unchanged. The Man states:

...the present ending just doesn 't work. (p. 41)

and that Appanna.

. will spend the rest of his days in misery. (p.41)

Generally, the consequences of betrayal are disastrous. The love triangle cannot be an exception to this rule. Even though it seems that the couple lives happily, no one can comprehend their distress and mental agony.

Therefore, the last sentence "*they lived happily ever after.*" (p.41) could be "*they lived happily ever after with a scratch in their minds.*"

The three major characters know the truth. Appanna's long aside reveals his delusion. He utters pathetically:

What am I to do? Is the whole world against me? Have I sinned so much that even Nature should laugh at me? I know I haven't slept with my wife. Let the

world say what it likes. Let any miracle declare her a goddess. But I know! What sense am I to make of my life if that's worth nothing? (p.41)

He accepts Rani's and Naga's child. It is even more torturous for Appanna to allow her son to perform the ritual to commemorate the death of the surrogate father. All his patriarchal authority is paralysed at the end. He has full confidence in the village court but his expectation is also frustrated by the strange decision. Appanna has to accept his wife with all her impurity. Appanna thus, is betrayed by his wife, Naga and the village court. He accepts his wife's superiority. A person who had once accused his wife of being "a harlot, a whore, a slut " now accepts her as a living goddess. Appanna is more sinned than sinning. His is the case of self deceit. Appanna, thus, revolves around the game of betrayal. Of his self-delusion R. K. Kaul (1995:1) says:

The husband, while professing to honour his wife, believes at the heart that he has been tricked into accepting the paternity of someone else's child

Naga is another case of self-betrayal. He can't bite Rani because of his intense love for her. In addition to this he knows that Rani belongs to one who is forever a man. He realises his limitations. He can't remain disguised as Appanna any longer. It is unbearable for him to see his night-queen in another man's arms. He, like a human being, develops a sense of jealousy. Sex is a physical act which requires human body to feel the joy or pain. The non-human can be a lover or a surrogate husband. Such human and non-human love ends up in disaster for the non-human entities. He feels a sense of alienation in the world of human beings. He summons his magical powers and becomes as thin and frail as the size of Rani's tresses. Like a sincere and noble lover, he commits suicide. His death has brought him nobility of Naga's self delusion.

Use of Myth and Folk forms:

Girish Karnad makes use of Myth and Folk forms in his plays to exorcise socio-cultural evils. He says, "The Energy of Folk-theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold the traditional values, it is also having the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their head." In this play Naga-Mandala, he exposes male chauvinism, the oppression of women, the great injustice done to them by men and patriarchal moral code. He even goes further and deflates the concept of chastity. He seems to suggest that matriarchy, the lost

paradise of mankind, will come again. The play is about Rani, representing atypical Hindu wife. Appanna, wealthy young man of village, marries her and brings her to his house when she attains womanhood. After taking bath and lunch, he locks her in and goes to concubine. He does not care for her feelings and considers her a subhuman slave who is to serve him with utmost loyalty. He treats her with the contempt of a typical male chauvinist. She feels very lonely, frightened and miserable. When she expresses her fear and loneliness, he ruthlessly disregards her feelings he says to her, “Look, I don’t like idle chatter. Don’t question me. Do as you are told you and you won’t be punished.” (Page-7).

She is deprived of the affection of her as her fellow human beings and the knowledge of the outer world. So her personality remains underdeveloped. Chastity is such a value invented by patriarchal culture and accepted by women. It is one of the most powerful yet invisible cultural fetters that have enslaved women for ages since the dawn of patriarchy. The concept of chastity goes with, and gets its indispensable support for, another morbid concept that sex is mean and sinful. Every mother along with father and other elders enslave her daughters to patriarchy by teaching them verbally or non-verbally that chastity is more important than life and that its loss which brings an unbearable social stigma is worse than death. Many women sacrifice their lives to protect their chastity and many other women silently and quietly tolerate all the oppression and violence of their sadistic husbands. If any bold woman violates these values, she is not only hated and condemned but also culturally ex-communicated. It is clear that the concept of chastity is gender-biased.

In *Naga-Mandala*, Appanna openly commits adultery with his concubine, but nobody raises any protest against it. The village elders who sit in judgement do not find fault with him. The village court tries the case of Rani only. This juxtaposition of male and female culprits at the village court which ignores the crime of Appanna highlights gender-biased justice.

7.3 Conclusion:

Girish Karnad’s play *Naga-Mandala* in the light of women’s struggle against patriarchy male-dominance and gender discourse. The lives of women have been manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages and cultures undoubtedly various ways by prescribing values, norms, gender roles and ethics to keep the male dominance at the top. Patriarchy has been depicted as a system of social structures and practices, in

which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. *Naga-Mandala* reflects a strong streak of feminism. The play questions the patriarchal moral code which demands the loyalty of a man to his wife, in this feminist play, Girish Karnad has created a world where the female protagonist is struggling to establish her identity and space of honour, and also posing a challenge to the norms and values made by male-dominated society.

Naga-Mandala, a play within a play, begins with prologue, is written in two acts. The characters of the prologue are the narrator- characters of the play proper and their story constitutes the sub-plot of the play. *Naga-Mandala* is basically the story of Rani who is right from the very beginning of the play, a victim of male chauvinism. She is born in a south Indian family steeped in orthodoxy where everything about woman - her manners, her ideas, even the very soil is determined by masculine standards. So, when Rani comes of age her 'fond father' finds a suitable husband for her in Appanna. Without taking much trouble of making formal inquiries and necessary investigations, Rani is married off to him. But the marriage which her 'fond father' had thought to have been successful one unexpectedly turns out to be a total failure, almost disastrous one.

In *Naga-Mandala*, it is with the help of the speech of Naga, Girish Karnad has successfully presented his ideas regarding sex education because in Indian society, children are taught not to talk or even think about the sexual behaviour of the parents. Indian society does not allow open discussion about sex. But here in this play, the character of Naga represents the modern approach to the problem. Karnad has explained that we do not make a secret of sex because sex is natural and ambient. In this way, the playwright has much emphasized to provide children sex education from school level.

A close reading of the play *Naga-Mandala*, a common reader has firmly believed that there is a poetic justice in this play. At the end of the play, Rani gets an honorable place in the society due to her lover Naga. She has also got her husband, a son and a servant for a whole life. Naga is duly rewarded for the noble service; he has rendered to Rani. The playwright has given the message that a loving Naga is better than a tyrant man. Girish Karnad, an existential playwright, has succeeded in depicting true picture of Indian society in which a husband can be as cruel as he wishes, but an Indian wife cannot think of doing any harm to her husband. Indian wives are generally masochistic.

Having examined the writings of Girish Karnad, the reader can accept the fact that Karnad has got a unique calibre to create beauty out of evil. However, Karnad has presented evil on the stage, his plays have universal appeal and they stand the test of time. Karnad has enriched the Indian theatre with the introduction of dramatic technique and methods to form perspectives towards myth and history. He has also given them contemporary contextual direction and new dimension. Karnad has earned wide acclaim in treatment of his theme, specifically existential aspect.

To sum up, Girish Karnad has effectively demonstrated how Indian Drama in English can revitalize itself by turning back to its root in ancient drama and how myths and history can serve as a powerful medium to dramatize contemporary situation.

7.4 Check your progress:

- 1) *Naga-Mandala* is based on two folk-stories which Girish Karnad heard from-----
-----.
 - a) Rabindranath Tagore
 - b) A.K. Ramanujan
 - c) Nana Palkiwala
 - d) Kamala Das
- 2) The sub-title of *Naga-Mandala* is-----.
 - a) Play with a Cobra
 - b) Work with Cobra
 - c) Dance with a Cobra
 - d) Run with a cobra
- 3) *Naga-Mandala* is based on the -----folk tale.
 - a) Karnataka
 - b) Gujarati
 - c) Bengali
 - d) Konkani
- 4) ----- acts are there in *Naga-Mandala*.
 - a) Two
 - b) Three
 - c) One
 - d) Five
- 5) The setting of the play *Naga-Mandala* is -----.
 - a) Open space
 - b) Creative hall
 - c) Ruined temple
 - d) Globe theatre
- 6) ----- ends are suggested in *Naga-Mandala*.
 - a) Two
 - b) Three
 - c) One
 - d) Five
- 7) The flames assemble in the ruined temple to -----.

- a) gossip b) pass the time c) dance d) make night duty
- 8) ----- is function of the flames in Girish Karnad's play *Naga-Mandala*.
 a) Greek Chorus b) Attention of the audience
 c) Beginning of the story d) Arranging the events
- 9) ----- is the protagonist of the story's story in *Naga-Mandala*.
 a) Rani b) Appanna c) Snake d) Kurudavva
- 10) Rani married to -----.
 a) Bappanna b) Appanna c) Kappanna d) Mappanna
- 11) Kurudavva is -----.
 a) old and blind b) Young and beautiful
 c) mad and bad d) fat and stout
- 12) Appanna daily visits to his-----.
 a) mother b) sister c) concubine d) grandmother
- 13) Kurudavva gifts Rani -----.
 a) magical roots b) pickle c) sari d) gold bangles
- 14) Rani pours the curry made with magical roots in the -----.
 a) well b) ant-hill c) road d) market
- 15) -----attracted towards Rani with the magical power of the roots.
 a) Cobra b) Appanna c) Kappanna d) Dog
- 16) Cobra enters into the house through -----.
 a) drainage b) window c) door d) ceiling
- 17) ----- ordeal proves the chastity of Rani.
 a) Snake catching b) Taking hot iron rod
 c) Putting hand in boiled oil d) Walking through fire
- 18) ----- compels Rani to make a snake ordeal.
 a) Cobra b) Appanna c) Villagers d) Kurudavva

- 19) ----- sees apparitions frequently in the play *Naga-Mandala*.
 a) Appanna b) Kappanna c) Kurudavva d) Rani
- 20) Villagers ----- Rani to the status of Goddess after her victory in the snake ordeal.
 a) hail b) criticise c) forgets d) takes procession
- 21) “Forgive me I was a sinner I was blind” is the dialogue of -----.
 a) Cobra b) Appanna c) Kurudavva d) Kappanna
- 22) At the end, Rani hides cobra in her -----.
 a) hair (lock) b) bed c) room d) bag

7.4 Answers

7.2.1.4

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) 19 th May, 1938 | 2) Girish Raghunath Karnad |
| 3) Karnataka | 4) <i>Wings of Fire</i> |
| 5) <i>Yayati</i> | 6) Kanada and English |
| 7) Indian | 8) Yakshagana and the theatre |
| 9) Kanada | 10) Gender |

7.2.3.4 Answers

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1) A.K. Ramanujan | 2) Play with a Cobra |
| 3) Karnataka | 4) Two |
| 5) Ruined temple | 6) Three |
| 7) gossip | 8) Greek Chorus |
| 9) Rani | 10) Appanna |
| 11) old and blind | 12) concubine |
| 13) magical roots | 14) ant-hill |
| 15) Cobra | 16) drainage |
| 17) Snake catching | 18) Cobra |

19) Kappanna

20) hail

21) Appanna

22) hair (lock)

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Module VIII
Harvest (Part-I)

Manjula Padmanabhan

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8.1.0 Objectives

- To understand the various features of Indian English Drama.
- To comprehend the postcolonial drama.
- To know about the futuristic play.
- To acquaint with the globalization and its disastrous impacts on the developing countries.
- To understand the themes, motifs and symbols of the play ‘Harvest’.

8.1.1 Introduction

Manjula Padmanabhan wrote this play in 1997 for Onassis Theatre Competition held in Greece on the challenges facing humanity in the next century. The play is about the exploitation of the poor nations by the rich through the sale of body parts. The action unfolds in 2010 in Bombay (Mumbai), where the transplant donors are cast as Indian and the receivers as North American. The play 'Harvest' tells the story of poor family of Om Prakash, Ma, Jaya, and Jeetu. Om Prakash is ready to transplant his organs to Inter Planta Services to overcome his poverty and enjoy a better lifestyle. This fictional transnational corporation provides human organs to the rich Americans. The rich American, Virgil, in the guise of Ginni, lures the poor family with modern resources of pleasure and money. However, they mistakenly take Jeetu, the brother of Om, as the donor. Jaya, Om's wife registers her strong opposition, as she prefers to die with dignity than succumb to the First World by sacrificing her identity rooted in her Third World body. The story presents the conflict between the First World and the Third World as it poses threat through the wireless communication and limitless money.

8.1.2 Biographical Information

Manjula Padmanabhan (1953-) born in Delhi on 23rd June 1953 belongs to Kerala. Her father was an IFS officer. She got her B.A. (Economics) and M.A. (History) from University of Mumbai. At young age, she joined the staff of a small magazine called Parsiana. She grew up in Europe and Southeast Asia. She is the daughter of a diplomat and she spent her childhood in Sweden, Pakistan, and Thailand. She has spent her creative life in Mumbai and Delhi. She is well known as a journalist, illustrator, cartoonist, fiction writer and writer of children's books as well as writing for television and the stage. She is the first Indian playwright to earn international fame with her play *Harvest* that is awarded with the Onassis International Cultural Competition Prize for Theatrical Plays in Greece in 1997. As a dramatist, she attempts to recreate theatre as an open-ended process rather than a finished product. Her plays convey social messages.

The list of her plays includes *Lights Out* (1984), *The Artist's Model* (1995), *The Sextet* (1996), *Harvest* (1998), and *Hidden Fires* (2003). She has authored short stories, novels, books for the children and comic strips. She wrote *Getting There* (2000) which is a travel memoir. *Escape* (2008) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015)

are her novels. Her short stories include *Hot Death, Cold Soup: Twelve Short Stories* (1996), *Kleptomania: Ten Stories* (2004). She has written the comic strips such as *This is Suki!* (2002), and *Double Talk* (2005). Her books for the children are *Mouse Attack* (2003), *Mouse Invaders* (2004), *Unprincess!* (2005), *I am different! Can you find me?* (2011), *We Are Different!* (2013), and *Three Virgins and Other Stories* (2013). She is the creator of the iconic *Suki*, a comic strip character appeared in the Sunday Observer (Mumbai) and later in The Pioneer (New Delhi). She is currently writing a weekly column 'Here, There and Elsewhere' for Blink, the Sunday Magazine of Business Line.

Check your progress

A) Complete the following choosing the correct alternative:

- i) Manjula Padmanabhan was born in -----.
a) 1960 b) 1953 c) 1970 d) 1966
- ii) Her play ----- was awarded the Onassis International Cultural Competition Prize.
a) Lights Out b) The Artist's Model
c) Harvest d) Hidden Fires
- iii) Her book *Getting There* is a ----- memoir.
a) adventure b) autobiographical
c) historical d) travel
- iv) She is well known for her comic character called -----.
a) Saki b) Suki c) Sukhi d) Saku
- v) Manjula Padmanabhan is famous for her ----- plays.
a) political b) historical c) mythological d) social

B) Answer the following in one word, phrase or sentence:

- 1) How many novels did Manjula Padmanabhan write?
- 2) Where did Manjula Padmanabhan born?
- 3) Which award did she get for her first play?

- 4) In which newspapers her comic strip character appears?
- 5) Which books of her for children have mouse as a central character?

8.1.3 Plot overview:

The play is about a small poor Indian family exploited by the rich Americans. The play has a futuristic setting in a Bombay (Mumbai) in 2010. In the first Act, we are introduced with a family that comprises Om Prakash, twenty years old young man, who is the only bread earner of the family but he is jobless. His nineteen years old wife is Jaya. His mother, Ma, is a sixty years old woman. Om has younger brother named Jeetu. The entire family is cursed with poverty. The family lives in a one-room house on the third floor of a tenement. Om is in search of a job so he is outside the house. As the play opens, Jaya and Ma are seen eagerly waiting for his return. Ma dislikes her younger son, Jeetu as he has become a male-prostitute. Therefore, she thinks that only Om will be a help for them. She also dislikes her daughter-in-law, Jaya as she protests against her for Jeetu.

When Om arrives at home, he announces about his new job. Ma is so much excited as her son has got the job. Om shares his horrible experience at Inter Planta Services to Jaya. He is selected as the donor of organs along with others from six thousand young jobless persons. They set up the contact Module and the Guards to monitor the activities of his family. Jaya is shocked when she learns that her husband has made contract with the corporation about donating the organs. When she confronts with the guard, Om tells him that Jaya is his sister and the wife of his brother, Jeetu. Om tells a lie to the guard because married people are not suitable as the donor.

Ma is confused about the strange nature of Om's job. Om does not require going outside but he is advised to stay healthy at home. The family is furnished with needful facilities as per the clause in the contract. However, Jaya feels scandalized on being introduced herself as Om's sister. She also resists the idea of being a wife of Jeetu.

When the contact Module becomes active, there appears an angel-like woman Ginni who interacts with family. She is actually the receiver of organs from America. She comes to know the deplorable condition of Om's family. She is disgusted to know that forty families share one toilet. She only cares about the hygiene of Om.

Therefore, Om's family immediately gets the new toilet and bath-shower. Meanwhile Jitu arrives at home and Jaya informs him about their new relation and Om's new job. Jaya wants to have children from Jeetu but he refuses her wish.

The second Act reveals that Om has almost been bought by Ginni. She provides a flush-toilet and new kind of food for his family. The family has now new T.V. set, Computer Terminal, an air conditioner, and two cubicles containing bathroom and toilet. This is given as a part of the deal for body-organs of Om Prakash. Ginni constantly keeps watch on Om's family through the contact Module. She gives instructions about Om's health.

One day Jeetu comes home with sores and scabs all over his body. Jaya washes his wounds and tries to make him clean. Om wants Jaya to leave him alone till the entire house is disinfected. Ma is also aware of that Om is the donor of his organs. She feels that Ginni is good, kind, generous and loving lady. She enjoys watching T.V. However, Jaya knows that their happiness is transitory and Om is reduced to a cabbage and he may not remain fit to donate the organs. She thinks her home as a fancy prison. She and Jeetu want to give up all the comforts Ginni has provided them and live free without fear.

The Guards of Ginni try to catch Jeetu as they mistake him for Om as the donor. They take him for the transplantation while Om hides himself in the toilet. Om fears that they will kill Jeetu as he is not officially on their records. Jeetu is brought on a stretcher. His head is covered with heavy bandages. The Guard informs the family that Jeetu has given parts of his body and they will receive next benefits of their contract.

Third act opens with another revelation that Jeetu is eyeless as his eyes are removed for transplantation. He attempts to kill himself but Jaya persuades him. Now Ginni appears on the contact Module to inform Jeetu about next phase of transplantation. She takes Jeetu as Om, the donor. She wants more organs from his body. The Guards take Jeetu for the next level of transplantation. Om convinces Jaya that he will go to Inter Planta to tell them truth. As he leaves, the contact Module becomes active. Jaya listen the voice of Virgil on the Module. Virgil wants to appear in his full form before her. When the Module sinks and rises, she finds a healed figure of Jeetu. Virgil tries to assure her that he is her Jeetu but she knows that it is mere phantom. Then Virgil explains that Ginni was nothing but "a computed--animated wet dream".

Jaya also realizes that Virgil is actually a man who talks like a woman because he wants to win Jaya. He wants a child-bearing woman who dreams about having children. Virgil further explains Jaya that they search for young man's bodies to live in and young women's bodies to sow their children. Virgil has managed to prolong his libido after fifty years of age. Now he wants children from nineteen-year-old Jaya. However, Jaya rejects his proposal as she cares less for such immoral transactions. She realizes that Jeetu is dead and he is a phantom. Virgil tries to use force to get the girl as he sends Guards to abduct her. She warns him firmly that she will prefer death if the Guards cause any discomfort to her. Finally, she says him to leave her alone to enjoy her life.

8.1.4 List of characters:

Om Prakash: Om Prakash is a young, and an unemployed Indian man. He is the twenty years old and the eldest son of Ma. He is the head of the family. He is jobless but is married to Jaya. He agrees to sell his unspecified organs through InterPlanta Services, Inc.

Ma: Ma is an uneducated lower middle class woman. She is a widowed mother of Om and Jeetu. She hates her daughter-in-law, Jaya.

Jaya: Jaya is nineteen years old girl married to Om. She is full with motherly passion and boldness. She is attracted towards her brother-in-law Jeetu.

Jeetu: Jeetu is Om's diseased younger brother. He becomes a male prostitute to earn his living. He is Jaya's secret lover.

Virgil/ Ginni: Virgil is an old man and the receiver of organs from America. He disguises himself as Ginni by projecting himself in the animated image of the seductive and lovely girl.

The Guards: The Guards are the employees of the InterPlanta Services. They provide essential facilities to Om's family. They capture Jeetu for organ transplantation.

Bidyut Bai: Bidyut Bai is a poor neighbor of the age of Ma. She lives in the same tenement and uses the bathroom facilities of Ma's house.

8.1.5 Act-wise summary:

Act-I

The play opens with a tenement of Bombay [Mumbai] where Om Prakash and his family live in one-room house on the third floor. Om is twenty years old and his wife, Jaya is nineteen years. His mother, Ma is a sixty years old woman. His younger brother, Jeetu [Jitendra] is a male prostitute. Om's family lives in extreme poverty, as Om is the only bread- earner. The action of the story takes place in 2010. Om has gone outside in search of a new job, as he is dismissed from his previous job of clerk. His family eagerly waits for his arrival with good news from him. Ma and Jaya argue with each other in the typical Indian way of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law role. Ma is more concerned about the job while Jaya knows the scarcity of jobs. She does not want that her husband should become prey of any evil corporation.

When Om returns to home, he informs Jaya about his new job as the donor of organs and his contract with InterPlanta Services. He describes the horrible experiences of selection process for this job. He warns Jaya to keep it as a secret from Ma. Ma is happy about the new job. Guard I from InterPlanta arrives there to give a starter kit. Later, he sets up the contact Module in Om's house to keep the communication. The guards also dismantle the kitchen and provide fuel. They are going to be monitored carefully by the Services through the guards and the contact Module. While making an enquiry about his family from the guards, Om presents Jaya as his sister. He informs them that her husband Jeetu is a businessperson and he is out for work.

Ma is confused about the strange nature of Om's job. Om is paid for staying healthy at home without doing any work. She overhears from their conversation that Om has donated his body to the foreigner in exchange of that they got a new modern kitchen. Jaya feels humiliated as she is introduced as Om's sister to the guards. Om explains her that it is only for the convenience, as the married people are not fit for the donation.

When the contact Module activates, a beautiful woman named Ginni appears. She investigates about the members of Om's family. She is suspicious about Jaya who has been introduced by Om as his sister. Ginni also learns the horrible fact about their poverty that forty families share one toilet and Jaya live in one-room along with her husband, mother-in-law and brother-in-law. She also knows that the house of Om

Prakash does not have a toilet. Ginny feels sorry for their pathetic condition and sends chocolate to Jaya.

Jaya and Jeetu meet on the roof of the tenement building. Jaya informs him about their changed relationship and Om's decision to sell his body organs to survive in the dire condition. For Jaya's surprise, Jeetu has already accepted those facts. He tries to impose himself as her true husband. Jaya is aware of Om's passive and hesitant nature. She wants to have children from Jeetu. However, Jeetu refuses to be a father as he is a male prostitute by profession. He sells his body to earn his livelihood. His mother does not welcome him.

Act-II

Ginni provides a flush toilet and new kind of food comprising pills and powders to Om Prakash family. Jaya indulges in lovemaking with Jeetu. She desperately needs love and children from him. Ginni is being informed that Jeetu is Jaya's husband and he is out on business. Om's family enjoys the new facilities provided from Ginni such as new T.V., Computer Terminal, mini-gym, an air conditioner, and newly established cubicles having bathroom and toilet. Om, Jaya, and Ma are in rich clothes with new footwear as they are in deal with the InterPlanta Services. Ma seems to be mostly interested in watching T.V. She hardly notices any important things. Om complains Ma about Bidyut Bai as she is utilizing their toilet facility, which is against their contract. Ginni appears frequently on the Module to instruct about her plan of action and monitor the activities of family. Ginni wants Jaya to be happy, as her smile will have good impact on Om's health. She wants happy atmosphere in Om's house to keep his organs healthy. Therefore, she cautions Jaya about sneezing. She thinks that if Om catches the cold due to this then he will be quarantined.

When Jeetu returns home, he declares about his new relations with Jaya before Ma. She strongly hates Jeetu for his profession and never wants him in that house. Jeetu wants to rest in home but he is treated as threat to family's health. They do not care about Jeetu's health but they are more concerned about the worsening hygienic condition.

In the next scene, Jeetu is lying in the centre with Om, Jaya, and Ma around him. He has sores and scabs all over his body. Jaya washes his wounded body. Om does not want him with the diseased body as he afraid of Ginni. He wants Jaya to

leave Jeetu until the entire house is disinfected. He wants to get help from the guards to solve Jeetu's issue. Om gets angry as Jaya calls him chicken for Ginni. Meanwhile a neighbor is not granted water from them. When they hear knocking on the door, Om fears that the guards will take action against them as they are hiding diseased Jeetu. He also fears that the guards will take him to remove organs from his body. Therefore, he hides himself behind the refrigerator. However, Ma knows that the deliveryman has arrived to deliver her order.

Ma thinks that Ginni is good, kind, generous, and loving lady. Jaya is of the opinion that their happiness will not last longer. She thinks that her real husband Om will not remain fit after donating his organs. He will turn to a cabbage and useless fellow. Jeetu and Jaya want to give up all the comforts given by Ginni and live free from fear. According to them, the house has turned into fancy prison and they want to redeem from it.

Ginni sends the guards to take away Om for organ transplantation. However, they commit mistake and capture Jeetu as the donor instead of Om. Jaya tries to prevent them but they have forcibly taken Jeetu. Om hides himself in the toilet. The guard assure the family that they will release Jeetu safely only after the transplantation.

Om fears that the InterPlanta Services will do harm to Jeetu if they suspect about his identity. Jeetu has not returned home. Om and his family suspect that he might have lost his important organ. Om fears that they can kill Jeetu, as he is not officially on their record. They speak about the brutality of the rich people. Om admits that he has accepted this contract due to his dismissal from his clerkship. Meanwhile, Jeetu has been brought on a stature as his head is covered with heavy bandages.

Act-III

Om's family is shocked by Jeetu's predicament as Jeetu removes his goggle to show his eyes. Jeetu's eyes have been taken by the InterPlanta Services as per the contract signed between them. He is terribly upset with his blindness, as he becomes the victim of mistaken identity. Om fears that Ginni will get angry on learning that they have taken the eyes of Jeetu instead of Om. Jeetu is eyeless and he wants to kill himself. Jaya tries to persuade him from killing.

Ginni appears on the contact Module reminding Jeetu for the next phase of transplantation. She takes Jeetu as Om. She wants more organs from his body. When he is left alone, Jeetu is seduced by the figure of Ginni. He decides to donate his body organs for the happiness of Jaya and others. The guards arrive at home to take away Jeetu for the next phase of surgery. Jaya tries to prevent them in vain. The guards are taking Jeetu. Jaya gets angry for the indifferent nature of Ma and Om. Ma seems to be more interested in watching the T.V. Om hides himself once again as he hears the knocking on the door. The agents arrive to deliver and install a newly purchased Video Couch by Ma.

Om decides to go to InterPlanta to tell them the whole truth. Jaya tries to dissuade him from going but he leaves home. Meanwhile, the contact Module becomes active. Jaya listen the voice of a woman. The voice assures her that she is her friend. In the due course of time, the voice reveals his real identity and declares himself as Virgil. He is ready to show his whole figure to Jaya. Jaya strongly refuses his desire. She knows that he is mere vision. The contact Module sinks and rises. She finds a figure of Jeetu appears in front of her. She can see complete transformation in him. He is a changed person who is completely healed. Virgil appears as Jeetu. Virgil explains Jaya that Ginni was nothing but a computed and animated thing. Virgil says to her that Jeetu is living better life as Virgil. He also explains her that he has selected Jeetu rather than Om because Jeetu was eager to free himself from his worst life.

Jaya realizes the fact that Virgil has disguised himself as a beautiful woman (Ginni) to attract her. Virgil wants child-bearing woman like Jaya who dreams about having children. Jaya wants a child from the love of an actual man. Therefore, she refuses the artificial way of motherhood and asks Virgil to leave her alone.

8.1.6 Glossary & Notes:

- **Missie Madam:** a young woman. Here Ma refers the childless status of her young daughter-in-law, Jaya.
- **Contact Module:** a device to interact.
- **Inter Planta Services:** here, a private American company involved in the illegal trade of human organs.
- **Donor:** here, refers to Mr. Om Prakash.

- **First World:** refers to highly developed Western countries.
- **Freelancer:** a person who is not necessarily committed to a particular employer for long-term. Here, Jaya refers Jeetu as freelancer to focus on his immoral profession.
- **Virgin Bodies:** married by arrangement. Here members of Om's family are solely controlled for hygiene and health by InterPlanta Services.
- **The Empress of the Bath-house:** here, Jaya ironically calls Ma by this title to show her dominating nature in trivial things as only their family has the separate bathroom facility in the tenement.
- **Face saving:** giving excuses saving from getting scold.
- **Zillion:** an unspecified large number.
- **Quarantine:** a sanitary measure to prevent the spread of contagious disease by isolating those believed or feared to be infected.
- **Health hazard:** something that could potentially endanger a person's health.
- **Incinerate:** to destroy by burning.
- **Fattened broiler:** here refers young and healthy donors of organs.
- **The cursed door:** here refers the doors of Om's house as they are always open for the InterPlanta Services
- **Fetos** , like embryo.
- **Fancy prison:** a well-furnished custody. Here Jeetu refers their home as it is well-equipped with all kinds of facility to be accessible for InterPlanta Services.
- **The slaughter house:** here Jaya refers the office of the InterPlanta Services.
- **Tutankhamen's sarcophagus:** ancient Egyptian's king's box –like stone container especially used as coffins.
- **Polygraph**, a lie detector test.

8.1.7 Characterization:

Jaya

Jaya is the central character of the play. She is the wife of Om Prakash. She is only nineteen years old. She maintains her dominating presence throughout the play with her intelligent and sensible nature from the beginning to end. She marries Om who lives in a small room of a tenement of Mumbai. The family lives in extreme poverty. Her husband is the only bread-earner of three people. She learns from her husband about the job of organ donation to survive in the crucial time of unemployment. She learns that the American agency has selected Om as he follows their conditions of organ transplant contract. She strongly resists the decision of Om because she knows the horrible consequences of his contract. Being a devoted Indian woman, she understands the significance of her husband's priceless life. However, her mother-in-law, Ma misunderstands her. She often tolerates the insults of her mother-in-law. Ma is delighted to learn that her son, Om is selected among six thousand candidates. Jaya tries to convince Om to give up this job, as it will end his life. However, Om decides to continue to work with the InterPlanta Services, as they are ready to provide huge money in exchange of organs. Om wants to sacrifice himself for the sake of his family.

Jaya is considerate towards Jeetu, her brother-in-law who is often neglected by others in the family. She thinks that both of them do not get proper attention in their family. In Act I, Scene i, she complains to Ma:

“Meaning that you and Om behave as if Jeetu and me don't exist”.

Jaya does not like Om's decision of selling his body organs to an agency in exchange of money. When the Guards arrive to install new kitchen with new gadgets she shows her discontent as she responds to Guard 1:

“Your- your man has thrown my stove into his bag and broken it! Who is going to replace that?”

The Guards of the agency took control over her territory, the kitchen. Therefore, she dislikes their interference like any other Indian housewife. When the Guards start survey of their family, she introduces herself as Om's sister. She takes very bold decision to declare herself as a wife of Jeetu. She knows that Om has reported himself as a bachelor and he will be disqualified from the job if he is found a married

person. She accepts the dual relationship with Om. She endures rebukes from Ma as she shows concern for Jeetu.

Jaya does not want to hide the real nature of Om's job from Ma. She persuades Om about explaining the truth to Ma. She reveals the truth to Ma and expresses her predicament in Act I, Scene ii:

'I'll tell you! He's sold the rights to his organs! His skin. His eyes. His arse. Sold them! Oh God, oh God! What's the meaning of this nightmare! (to OM) How can I hold your hand, touch your face, knowing that at any moment it might be snatched away from me and flung across the globe! If you were dead, I could have shave my head and break my bangles-but this? To be a widow by slow degrees? To mourn you piece by piece? Should I shave half my head? Break my bangles one at a time?'"

She thinks that by accepting the contract of InterPlanta Services Om is going to die and she will be a widow. She meets Jeetu not for sexual pleasure but to get a child from him, as she is aware of Om's inability to court her, in a single room in front of Ma. She has a strong feeling of mother as Ma scolds her for being childless woman. She desires to become a mother.

Her relations with Jeetu seem to be most disturbing to Ma. Jaya has a concern for Jeetu because she understands the pitiable condition of Jeetu. She understands that Jeetu has turned into a male prostitution due to their poverty. She takes pity on him as the poverty has degraded him to such a low level. She tries to dissuade him from this disgusting profession. She showers love over him as a good human being. She wants that he should give up this profession and join them in their newly improved life. However, Jeetu does not want to return to home as he has lost love and dignity. He also knows that Om is going to pay a huge price of his life for all these facilities.

Jaya even allows him to make love with her. However, Jeetu is not motivated by fatherly feelings. He does not want to take the responsibility as father of newborn babies. He is a free man without any bondage. However, one day he returns home in an extreme health condition. Jaya once again supports him. She cleans his body and attends to wounds in spite of Om and Ma's opposition. She assures his stay in the house as a family member. Even she is ready to accept punishment for the cruel treatment meted out by family to him. She frankly admits that Jeetu's family is

responsible for his status. She takes initiative to prove that Jeetu has every right to live in the house.

Jaya is wise enough to learn the vicious circle of poverty. She notices that her husband and Jeetu have become the victims of poverty and exploitation. She gradually understands the ways of exploitation afflicted upon their family by the InterPlanta Services. She also knows that Ginni is not an angel though she has provided facilities of leisure and luxury. She knows that they are cruel exploiters under the disguise of angelic and beautiful faces. They can easily cheat the innocent poor people like Ma. She exposes their so-called sweet nature in the Act II, Scene ii:

“Never mind chicken- have you seen how their beef cattle live? Air-conditioned! Individual potties! Music from loudspeakers- why, they even have their own psychiatrists! All to ensure that their meat, when it finally gets to Ginni’s table, will be the freshest, purest, sanest, happiest -”

She constantly warns the family about Ginni’s suspicious nature. She condemns the rich westerners like Ginni who simply becomes generous to accomplish their selfish goal. The poor Indians are nothing to them but like a chicken to be slaughtered to appease their appetite. She exposes the relationship between the poor Donors and the rich Receivers. Thus, she uses the words such as “chicken” and “cabbage” to indicate the value of Om’s body for Ginni. She feels sorry for the pitiable condition of Jeetu. She even tries to prevent the Guards while taking him away as the donor. Jeetu could also experience her caring nature as he finds her only companion to share his feelings. When he returns home losing his eyes she consoles him. Jeetu meets his tragic death in the second phase of transplantation. Om leaves the home in extreme regret. Ma prefers to live in her dream machine.

Jaya is left alone and Virgil who constantly keeps watch on her daily activities replaces Ginni. Virgil is attracted by Jaya’s nature and he demands her consent in getting a child from her. Jaya strongly condemns the idea of a child from a strange and treacherous foreigner. When Virgil cajoles her with his beautiful body, she rejects his proposal of mechanical procreation. She prefers to live and even die with dignity and pride in poverty. She declares her opinion to Virgil in the Act III, Scene ii:

“You’ll only share your electronic dreams with me, your “virtual” touch, your plastic shadows-no! If the only clothes I can afford are these rags of pride, then I’ll wear them with my head held high-”

Thus, Jaya represents Indian woman of self-confidence and dignity who never succumbs before the forces of exploitation and power. She prefers to die with pride and purity as she threatens to Virgil with her final decision in the Act III, Scene ii:

“I’m going to take my pills, watch TV, have a dozen baths a day, eat for three instead of one. For the first time in my life and maybe the last time of my life, I’m going to enjoy myself.”

Thus, the character of Jaya emerges as a strong-minded, loving, and caring Indian housewife. She strongly opposes the exploitative system and maintains her pride and dignity even in adverse conditions.

Om Prakash

Om Prakash is twenty years old person. He is the elder son of Ma and the husband of Jaya. He loses his job working as a clerk and desperately needs another job because he is the only breadwinner in his family. His family includes Ma, Jaya, and Jeetu. He is of medium height, nervy and thin. He is the lower middle class person who supports his family. He lives in a tenement where forty families share one toilet. He lives in extreme poverty as his brother has chosen an immoral profession of a male-prostitution. When the play opens, Om is selected for a job among six thousand men. The Inter Planta Services has given him job, as they need human organs from the young jobless people. Om accepts their contract to get rid of poverty. However, his decision is strongly opposed by his wife, Jaya, as she is aware of its horrible consequences.

When he returns home with a new job, his mother looks happy. He decides to sell his own body organs to bring financial stability at home. He is happy to share good news of new job with her. He does not disclose the real nature of his job to them. His mother is confused with the strange conditions of his job as he is going to stay healthy at home. He lives with family without any work. Jaya comes to know that he is going to transplant his organs to the agency. The Inter Planta Services appoints guards to check his activities. They install Contact Module to monitor his household activities. Thus, Om’s life is fully regulated by the rich Americans. According to the contract, the Donor and his family follow the instructions of the

agency. The guards change their kitchen with new gadgets and install new bathroom facilities. They have to eat pills and powders provided by the agency. Even the fuel is also supplied by the agency. It shows that Om and his family come under the strict surveillance of the Inter Planta Services.

Om willingly accepts this contract because of his extreme poverty. He knows that hereafter he has no control over his body but it is going to be used by the rich Americans. In order to maintain the contract, he registers himself as a bachelor because the married candidates were not suitable for organ transplantation. His wife Jaya presents herself as his sister in front of the guards. He takes this unpleasant decision for the sake of his family. He further explains about his decision to Jaya in the Act I, Scene ii:

“You think I did it lightly. But at the cost of calling you my sister----we’ll be *rich!* Very rich! Insanely rich! But you’d rather live in this one small room, I suppose! Think it’s such a fine thing-living day in, day out, like monkeys in a hot-case-lulled to sleep by our neighbors’ rhythmic farting! Dancing to the tune of the melodious traffic! And starving. Yes, you’d prefer this to being called my sister on a stupid slip of paper no-one we know will ever see!”

Om sacrifices his life for the sake of his family even though it appears illogical and immoral. He accepts the change in relationships between him and Jaya to obtain the job. He does not openly talk about the job to Ma, as it will disturb her. However, Jaya exposes the horror of the contract to her. He seems to be helpless due to poverty. He is the representative of all the unemployed youths of his time. Therefore, he accepts the contract of organ transplant. The rich American Ginni observes the poor conditions of his family. She is shocked to learn that they are deprived from basic amenities such as toilet. When the guards dismantle their kitchen and install new, he does not complain. It shows his passive and tolerant nature. Even he is unable to make love with his wife in the single room home. He is caught in the dilemma about his role as a head of the family. He is unable to stop argument between Jaya and Ma. He accepts the love relations between Jaya and Jeetu.

Om continues to be faithful with the InterPlanta Services. He is grateful to the agency for providing his family the new facilities. As a bound laborer, he meekly accepts their every condition. He always interacts with Ginni with the Contact Module. He presents himself and others as modest and obedient in front of her. Even

he accepts his mistakes in not following the meal timings and health precautions. He knows that he has to maintain his health and donate his organs in the following days. Therefore, he rejects Jeetu's existence, as he seems to be a 'health hazard' for the entire family. He fears that the agency will cancel the contract for violating the instructions and regulations.

Om appears to be coward and timid as the guards appear in the house to take him for the organ transplant, he hides himself behind the refrigerator. The guards take away Jeetu for transplant instead of him. He fears that the agency will take disadvantages of Jeetu. He shows his concern as he remarks in the Act II, Scene iv:

"There are no laws to protect strays like him. He's not officially on their records-they can do whatever they like-"

His fear about his brother's safety proves to be valid as Jeetu loses his eyes. His eyes are removed by the agency. Om is helpless to go against this transplant. He has failed to find a good job. He rightly talks about the present scenario in the Act II, Scene ii to Jaya:

"I went because I lost my job in the company. And why did I lose it? Because I am a clerk and nobody needs clerks anymore! There are no new jobs now-there's nothing *left* for people like us! Don't you know that? There's us-and the street gangs-and the rich."

Thus, Om comments on his predicament, as they have no choice, but to accept the contract. When the agency takes out Jeetu's eyes, Jeetu is ready for the next phase of transplantation. Om and Jaya try to dissuade him from donation. When Jeetu goes for transplant, Om leaves home to inform the mistake committed by the agency. He determines to tell the truth about the real donor. Thus, Om appears as a responsible son to Ma but he fails to prove as a good husband and brother. He does not fulfill his promises as he sacrifices his brother. His submissive and timid nature brings the catastrophe to his family. He signs a devilish contract that disrupts the life of his entire family members.

Jeetu

Jeetu is seventeen, handsome younger brother of Om. He is dashing, easy-going, and loveable person. Like Om, he also suffers from poverty. He prefers an immoral profession of male-prostitution to survive in the hard circumstances. He

always keeps himself away from his family. He enjoys his freedom of choice and solitary way of life. He does not get enough attention by his family due to his immoral profession. Om is selected for a new job only after he registers himself as a bachelor although he is married to Jaya. As a prerequisite condition, he has to record the names of his family members to the InterPlanta Services. In order to maintain his job, Om presets Jaya as his sister and wife of his brother, Jeetu. They declare Jeetu as a businessperson who is away from home for a business purpose.

When Jaya secretly meets Jeetu on the roof of the tenement, she tells him about their changed relations. She also informs him about Om's new job as a donor of organs. Jeetu has heard about it as Om has sold himself to the rich Americans for the sake of money. He receives neither love nor affection from his family. Ma hates him and Jaya for their behavior as she remarks in the Act I, Scene i:

“The gods left a jackal in my belly by mistake when they made him- maybe that's why you like him- he's just like you, rude, insolent, ungrateful-”

Ma often considers Jeetu as a vulgar and spoilt character. Therefore, she dislikes his presence in the house. When Jaya approaches him with love, he denies being her lover. He does not consider himself as a responsible person. He does not want to remain as a family man. Therefore, he says to Jaya in the Act I, Scene iii:

“That other hunger is insatiable. A man has to protect himself against that hunger or he will find himself sucked dry by new little mouths, screaming “Papa! Papa!” Little mouths with big appetites. Oh no! I'm afraid of that other hunger! Mortally afraid!”

Jeetu wants to lead life in his own way. He throws away all the responsibilities as family member. He does not accept Jaya's proposal of becoming a registered family member and enjoy the facilities provided by the InterPlanta Services. He does not want to be a slave of the agency and eat pills and powder instead of food. He knows that his brother has sold himself to an agency.

One day he returns home in the terrible condition, as his clothes are tattered and his hair is covered with mud and dirt. He requires immediate remedy to recover from his illness. Om and Ma disapprove his presence in the house, as they fear about Ginni. They know that Ginni will not permit them to grant unofficial stay of Jeetu. Even Om considers him as a “health hazard”. Jeetu regretfully retorts to Om in the Act II, Scene i:

“A “health hazard” did you say? Heh! That’s rich! Me- a health “hazard”! My brother- I’m not a health hazard, I’m a walking, talking, health CATASTROPHE! Oh, yes! I’m so unhealthy that even my germs have germs---yes.”

Jeetu is surprised by their changed approach towards him, as they are newly rich people. His wounds are attended by Jaya. He also finds that they are more interested in new modern way of life. Ma is seen involved in watching TV. He expresses his anguish about the indifferent approach of Ma in the Act II, Scene i:

“And you, my mother? I hear your love for me has been bought for the price of a flush toilet?”

Thus, Jeetu is known for his candid and reckless behavior. He loves his freedom more than any material pleasures. He dislikes his family, as they have been living life on the facilities provided by the InterPlanta Services. He compares his street life with their new life in the Act II, Scene i:

“I have spent my hoard of years-splurged them all, for a few weeks of freedom on the streets. Freedom to lie in the filth of the open road and to drink from the open sewer! Yes. Freedom to eat the choicest servings from the garbage dump-shared only with crows, flies and pigs! Ah, such freedom as you newly-rich people never know!”

Jeetu’s profession ruins his health condition. He is also not accepted by his family except Jaya who looks after him during his injury. She is often considerate to him. She wants to reform him. When the guards catch him as Om for organ transplant, she resists them in vain. The Inter Planta Services forcibly takes Jeetu for organ transplantation. They remove eyes from his body. He is left blind in his house. He feels very helpless as his eyes are taken out by force. Now he thinks his life is useless. He decides to go for the next phase of organ transplant as he is lured by the attractive figure of Ginni. He fails to differentiate between reality and fantasy. He also fails to recognize the value of love and care given by Jaya. In the end, he meets his tragic death in the organ transplant.

Thus, Jeetu appears as a tragic hero who never surrenders before the adverse conditions but ceaselessly fights a battle against all the odd things of his life. He accepts death rather than to live as a slave. His fight against poverty and tyranny lasts up to his death in the end of the play.

Ginni:

Ginni is the representative of the rich Americans who search for the organ donors from the world. She finds Om Prakash as the Donor. The InterPlanta Services installs the Contact Module to connect with the Donor. Then Ginni appears on the screen of the Contact Module where she interacts with Om and his other family members. She is the Receiver who has purchased the body organs of Om. Therefore, she keeps surveillance on every activity of Om and his family. She is more concerned about the health of Om as he must be happy and healthy. Therefore, as per the contract, the InterPlanta Services sends the guards to dismantle their old kitchen and replace with new. The guards also install a power-generating device. As they install the Contact Module, they inform Om and his family how it will function as follows in the Act I, Scene i:

“At the time of first contact, you and your Receiver will exchange personal information.”

She introduces herself as Virginia who looks attractive. In the Act I, Scene ii her entry is described as:

The CONTACT MODULE comes to life. It displays a young woman’s face, beautiful in a youthful, glamorous, First World manner.

In her first encounter with Om’s family, she is shocked by the fact that forty families share one toilet and Om and his family does not have a separate bathroom and toilet. She registers her surprise as she talks with Om in the Act I, Scene ii:

“Excuse me, but you’ll have to find the space. It’s inexcusable not to have your own toilet! Forty families! It’s a wonder you’re all not dead of the plague years ago!”

Ginni is more concerned about the unsanitary environment of her donor. She feels pity for Jaya as she lives in such awful condition. She extends help to her as she promises to install new bathroom facilities. She takes every measure to protect Om, the Donor from any disease. She is in need of his healthy organ. Therefore, she reprimands Jaya for her sad attitude. She warns her to keep Om always happy because she has a reason behind it. She explains in the Act II, Scene i:

“If I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a hundred times. The Most Important Thing is to keep *Auwm* smiling. Coz if *Auwm*’s smiling, it means his body is smiling and if his

body's smiling, it means his organs are smiling. And that's the kind of organs that'll survive a transplant best, smiling organs-”

Ginni is the rich Receiver of America who keeps close watch on Om's family. She is curious to know about Om's family members, their relations, their lifestyle, their culture etc. She does not like giving excuses for not following the regulations of the contract as she finds that Om is not eating at regular hours. She says to Om in the Act II, Scene i:

“You can't help it, I know, it's a part of your culture-it's what your people do when they want to Avoid Conflict and it's even got a name: it's called “face saving”.

Om's mother, Ma seems to be attracted by Ginni. She is impressed by her beauty and richness. Her beauty also attracts even Jeetu. Though he has lost his both eyes in the first transplant, the beautiful virtual image of Ginni provokes him for the next transplant. He is ready to offer himself for the second phase of transplant. After the second phase of transplant, Ginni is replaced by Virgil. He explains about the mysterious character of Ginni as he says in the Act III, Scene ii that Ginni was:”Nothing. Nobody. A computer-animated wet-dream.”

Thus, the character of Ginni is the manifestation of attractive trap to lure the innocent poor youngsters by the rich middle aged Americans. Virgil disguises as a beautiful woman, Ginni to attract Jaya. His virtual image of Ginni is the deceptive strategy to attract donors. He has transplanted four times in his fifty years of life to remain young. He also wants to flirt with Jaya and expects child from her. However, the sensible Jaya who remains firm and never surrenders herself to him overthrows his plans. Thus, the character of Ginni is a “caricature of an American glamour queen, universally-recognized stereotype”.

Ma:

Ma is the uneducated lower middle class woman. She is a widowed mother of Om and Jeetu. She is sixty years old woman. She lives in the tenement in extreme poverty as Om is the only bread-winner in their family. Jeetu rarely comes home. She becomes happy as Om gets a new job. However, she is ignorant about his nature of job. She is not comfortable with her daughter-in-law, Jaya. She hates both Jaya and Jeetu as she suspects about their immoral relationship. She dislikes Jeetu as her son because he is a male-prostitute. She disrespects the role of Jaya as a wife of Om.

She often quarrels with Jaya on petty issues. She is introduced as Mrs. Indumati before the guards of the InterPlanta Services.

She gets confused about Om's job, as he has to stay home. When she interacts with Ginni through the Contact Module, she forgets about the dangerous contract. She enjoys the facilities supplied by the Services. She spends most of her time in watching TV. She seems to be least concerned about Om's life. She indulges herself into new gadgets of an entertainment. For her, Ginni becomes an angel. She dreams about the marriage between Ginni and Om as she states in the Act II, Scene ii:

“Who knows? Maybe she'll even want you for a husband someday- why not? If my son's kidneys are good enough for her-”

Ma is unaware of the horrible consequences of Om's contract. She remains indifferent as the guards take away Jeetu for the organ transplant. Therefore, Jaya reacts about her neutral attitude in the Act II, Scene iii:

“Your son goes off to the slaughter house and you're just worried about your TV!”

Ma often scolds Jaya for her childless status. She thinks that Ginni will be better wife for Om than Jaya. She remains her own world of entertainment. She spends Om's money on purchasing new devices of entertainment such as the Super Deluxe Video Couch. She does not notice the risky business of the contract signed by Om. She prefers to close herself inside the 'fully automatic Video Paradiso unit' that will keep her engaged into the fantasy world.

Thus, Ma is the stereotype character of Indian housewife. She is the typical mother-in-law of the lower middle class family. She is dominating and quarrelsome woman who often neglects the importance of the daughter-in-law.

● **Check your progress**

C] Choose the correct option given below:

1. Jaya pretends as ----- to save Om's job.
A] Om's wife B] Jeetu's sister C] Om's sister D] housemaid
2. ----- wishes that Om should not get the new job.
A] Ma B] Jeetu C] Jaya D] Om

3. According to Ma, ----- is an angel.
A] Om B] Ginni C] Jaya D] Jeetu
4. ----- is not a real human being, but 'a computer-animated wet-dream'.
A] Vidyut Bai B] Virgil C] Jeetu D] Ginni
5. ----- gets job at the Inter Planta Services.
A] Om B] Jaya C] Jeetu D] Ginni
6. Ginni is excited to talk with the people of -----.
A] England B] America C] India D] Pakistan
7. In her first meeting, Ginni sends ----- to Jaya.
A] jewelry B] TV C] chocolate D] perfume
8. Jaya calls Jeetu as ----- because he is a male prostitute.
A] a free bird B] a free man C] a free bachelor D] a free-lancer
9. Jaya ironically refers Ma as The Empress of -----.
A] the House B] the Bath-house C] India D] the Tenement
10. According to Om, ----- is a 'health hazard'.
A] Ginni B] Jaya C] Bidyut Bai D] Jeetu
11. According to Ginni, the curse of the Donor World is -----.
A] poverty B] population C] sentimentality D] unemployment
12. As per the contract of the InterPlanta Services, Om has to -----.
A] work in the office B] donate his organs
C] find other donors D] hand over Jeetu as a donor
13. The guards take away Jeetu as the donor because ----.
A] Jeetu is better for transplant B] Om hides in the fridge
C] Jeetu is a male- prostitute D] Om has broken the contract
14. Ma compares her family with the TV show named-----.
A] Beautiful Families B] Happy Families

- C] Honest Families D] Rich Families
15. ----- calls his newly changed house as 'fancy prison'.
- A] Jaya B] Jeetu C] Om D] Ma
16. The InterPlanta Services removes ----- from Jeetu's body during the first phase of transplant.
- A] kidneys B] lever C] eyes D] intestines
17. According to -----, they have lost the art of having children.
- A] Om B] Jaya C] Ginni D] Virgil
18. According to Jaya, she had ----- to protect herself from Virgil.
- A] gun B] Om and Ma
- C] death and pride D] money and power
19. Jaya threatens ----- to save from Virgil.
- A] to shoot herself B] to cut her throat with glass
- B] to take poison D] to register a complaint in the police station
20. Jaya rejects Virgil's proposal because -----.
- A] she loves Jeetu B] he is a phantom
- C] she loves Om D] he threatens her

Key to check your progress:

- A] i] 1953 ii] Harvest iii] travel iv] Suki v] social
- B] 1] two 2] Delhi 3] The Onassis International Cultural Competition Prize for Theatrical Plays 4] The Sunday Observer and The Pioneer 5] Mouse Attack and Mouse Invaders
- C] 1] Om's sister 2] Jaya 3] Ginni 4] Ginni 5] Om
- 6] India 7] chocolate 8] a free-lancer 9] the Bath-house 10] Jeetu
- 11] sentimentality 12] donate his organs 13] Jeetu is better for transplant
- 14] Happy Families 15] Jeetu 16] eyes 17] Virgil
- 18] death and pride 19] to cut her throat with glass 20] he is a phantom

8.1.8 Activities:

1. Visit a slum area and describe it in your own words.
2. Point out the salient features of a science-fiction.
3. Write an essay on the international trafficking of human organs.

8.1.9 Suggested Reading:

1. Padmanabhan, Manjula. *Harvest* (Gurugram: Hachette, 2017)
2. Sagar, Prem. *Harvest* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Inabooks)
3. Sunita, J.V. Socio-Economic Ethos in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*. *Int.J.Eng.Lang.Lit&Trans.Studies* Vol.3.Issue. 1.2016 (Jan-Mar)
4. Bedre, R.T.& Giram, M.M. Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*: A Battle Between Machine and (wo)Man. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* ,Volume1, Issue.2, September 2013
5. Sojan, Abin. *Marauding Capitalism and the Marginalized People: A Contemporary*
6. Reading of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, Volume 6, Issue 1 January 2018



Harvest (Part-II)

- Manjula Padmanabhan

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8.2.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able

- To view the play with different interpretations
- To discuss themes in the play
- To understand the style and symbols used in the play

8.2.1 Introduction

Manjula Padmanabhan's play 'Harvest' is a science fiction, which sets in near future 2010 by which time it is believed that the international sale of organs has developed into an industry. The third world nations are seen as resource to provide organs for the first world. It is a futuristic play, which deals with the interaction between human and machine, body and technology and gendered and virtual identity.

The play takes up the issue of inhuman and undignified treatment of individuals, commoditization of the body of the poor from the third world and rising impact of

technological advancement on everyday lives of the people. The play has been interpreted by many critics from different points of view. It is also appreciated for its style and use of symbols.

8.2.2 Reflection of Indian socio-economic ethos in Manjula Padmanabhan's Harvest

The setting of the play is a single room apartment of a lower-middle class family, which lives in a humble locality of urban area. Forty families live in the same tenement with a single common toilet. Om Prakash and his family, his mother Mrs Indumati Prakash, his wife Jaya and his brother, Jeetu, live in one of the rooms of the tenement. This is the common picture of Indian family living in the chawls of (Bombay) Mumbai. Their living in a single overcrowded room, with common toilet, and the polluted and noisy environment indicate their extreme poverty, unhygienic and miserable condition as they barely survive as human beings with the least basic facilities.

The unemployed and poverty-stricken Om encounters the InterPlanta Services in search of his job. He is the representative of Third world and the agency belongs to the First world. The play demonstrates the clash between developing and developed countries in the futuristic sense. It focuses on the centralization of global economy and power and the gap between East and West along with the medical and technological advancements. The play comments on the flourishing organ industry and western imperialism which resulted in the commoditization of the third world human body, considering them as sub-humans, reduced to the body or mere body parts. The play talks about the world of organ industry such as the InterPlanta Services where human body/parts are available, marketable, having exchange value. It marks the widening rift between the poor donor and the rich receiver. It presents a dystopian world where the rich from the developed world purchases health organs from the poor of the third world country for their own survival and development.

The central character of the play is Jaya, a reasonable and dynamic lady, who is in the socio-cultural role of a wife and daughter-in-law. She stands apart from the other characters. Being a sensible wife of Om, she participates in the changing role of social relations to survive and support the family. She is quite sure about the predicament of Om who lies about his marital status in getting the job from the agency. Om has to prove himself as an unmarried person to the guards who are on

duty to collect the information of donor's family. Jaya comes to rescue Om from his social tie as a wife who liberates him as her husband. She declares herself as sister of Om and wife of Jeetu. She sacrifices her relation for the sake of family. However, she knows that they are concealing the fact to abide the conditions of contract. To qualify as a donor, Om lied to InterPlanta Services that he is single. It is only Jaya who understands the situation and questions to Om for taking up the wrong decision of selling his body organs. She finds it very hard to cope with the changed relations. She is a love monger who hardly gets it back both from Om and Jeetu. She plays a dual role of wife and beloved. In the ultra-modern world of technology, the woman is forced to perform her socially assigned and biologically non-obligatory role of child bearing to create the future generation of donors in the third world. The character of Virgil, a male virtual identity even attempts to exploit Jaya as woman who is capable of being a mother. He wants to rear up his child through Jaya. Virgil says to Jaya, "We look for young men's bodies to live in and young women's bodies in which to sow their children" It indicates the secondary status and marginalization of women in the third world. It also displays extreme ways of exploitation of socially and economically backward people by the developed countries. However, Jaya decides not to sell her body parts or give rights to anybody else on her body as Om and Jeetu did. She maintains her self-respect and identity with pride and firm decisions even in the social and economic adverse conditions. Like Ma, her mother-in-law, she is not even after the virtual fantasies.

Om Prakash and his brother, Jeetu are the representatives of third world men who are physically and sexually exploited by the rich. Due to the advent of technological advancement, the machines replace the humans. The clerks such as Om are jobless and even the poor youths like Jeetu are either forced to sell their bodies or dragged into prostitution to give sexual services. Om being unemployed and frustrated is ready to accept any job to survive, as he is the only breadwinner of his family as his wife and mother both are financially dependent on him completely.

Om's younger brother Jeetu is in worse condition as he sells himself being a male prostitute. Ma disowns him as her son because of his disrespectful and immoral profession. He lives away from his family as they do not want Jeetu and his money earned from the disgraceful profession. Thus, Om and Jeetu lose their rights over their bodies as they sell themselves for the sake of money. Virgil is the representative of the rich western world where sick people are always in search of

healthy organs from the third world. Virgil, a wealthy man from the first world country targets and monitors Om, Jeetu and Jaya hence, three human bodies among four of the family members, leaving Ma's old body as incapable to serve. The play displays an extreme and worst state of exploitation as the third world is socially and financially weak.

8.2.3 Harvest: Human versus Machine

The story of the play centres on Om Prakash, who signs up to be an organ donor for the agency named InterPlanta Services. He is the victim of the financial crisis and computerization at the international level. He is the only bread-winner of his family as they live in the tenement. His family comprises his mother, Indumati Prakash, his wife, Jaya, and his younger brother, Jeetu. He loses his job as a clerk due to technological advances and he is replaced by machine like other jobless employees. The play opens with Om's search for new job with other thousand unemployed people. Ma and Jaya are seen waiting for Om who is about to come after job-hunting. Consequently, he falls to victim to the flourishing organ transaction international trade. Om comes back and begins to describe how he has been selected for a different kind of job. He narrates the mechanical instructions at the time of his selection procedure. There begins the commanding influence of the machines in human life. His selection as a candidate is completely controlled by the machines functioning at different levels. Being unskilled employee, Om's body is the only asset for him in order to get a job. The InterPlanta Services is the agency working in the organ transplantation. It requires the organ donors who are ready to donate their body organs in exchange of money. The agency works for the rich American receivers who are in need of organ transplant. Om has to undergo certain precautionary measures before donating his organs to the agency. The InterPlanta Services check the bodies of the candidate before selection with machines as if they are inanimate things. The men in line were ordered and monitored by the instructions being given by the faceless machines. As they were selected, they were given packets with essential things to remain in contact with the agency. Om describes the selection procedure of thousand jobless people who were crammed in a building like a big machine as if they are animals. Their condition reminds the Jews treated in the concentration camps of Nazi militaries. He describes the inhuman treatment given to them as they enter in the tunnel:

Then – a sort of – rain burst. I wonder if I am dreaming! The water is hot, scented. Then cold. Then hot air. Then again the water. It stings a little, this second water. Smells like some medicine. Then air again. Then we pass through another place...I don't know what is happening. Ahead of me a man screams and cries, but we are in separate little cages now, can't move. At one place, something comes to cover the eyes. There's no time to think, just do. Put your arm here, get one prick, put your arm there, get another prick- Pissshhh! Pissshhh! Sit here, stand here, take your head his side, look at a light that side. (I.i.-16)

The above narrative focuses on the machine-like interaction between the employee and the employer in the technically advanced stage of the selection procedure in the postmodern world. All the instructions and guidelines are given through the machines without any human contact.

When Om returns to home with a good news of job, his future movements are going to be regulated by the terms and conditions of the agency. The guards to do the family survey immediately follow him. They carry out their work as if they are not human but machines. The very language used by the guards is exact, neutral, dry, and machine like devoid of human concerns. The InterPlanta Services installs the contact module, an electronic device, to keep them in touch with the rich American buyers. Om and his family first time come in contact with the rich people who are in the flesh market. The contact module is the meeting place between the real and virtual people. It destroys the privacy and solidarity of the family as it becomes a tool of authority and power in the hands of the rich people like Ginni and Virgil. Hereafter, Ginni has taken control over Om's family with the contact module. She gives instructions to Om and his family regarding the significance of Om's health and happiness. Jaya and Ma are ordered to keep him happy and healthy so that his organs remain healthy and fit to be transplanted. Om is given food as prescribed by the machine in the form of coloured pellets and powder. Even their old kitchen is also modified. They receive the new toilet and bathroom facilities in the same room. Ginni instructs in a commanding way because she has got the ownership on the body of Om. The timings of food, bathing, taking medicines, even going to toilet are monitored by the contact-module.

Though the ever-growing use of electronic devices like computer has turned Om jobless, his sixty-year-old mother seems to be addicted to another electronic domestic device-television. She appears to be less concerned about her son and

daughter-in-law. She rather forgets the daily life and involves herself in an entertainment. One feels that she believes more in the celluloid world than the real world where one finds difficult to feed only four members in the family. However, the modern technological devices are the tools of exploitation for the rich. Her interest in virtual world affects on her emotional engagement with her family members. She remains more neutral, passive and neutral in her decisions. She appreciates the happy episodes of television with joy but forgets the hardships of Om and Jeetu.

In her extreme interest in the entertaining new gadgets, Ma orders online VideoCouch. She becomes slave of the machines as it satisfies her wishes. The agents from the company arrives to install the device in her home, he explains how it functions:

AGENT: This is the Super Deluxe video coach model XL 5000! We are certain it will provide you our valued customer with every satisfaction. This is the nourishment panel- the hydration. This is the organic input interface-the hydration filter- the pangrometer! Here you see the Lexus Phantasticon which is programmed to receive seven hundred and fifty video channels from all over the world! There are ten modes, seventeen frequencies, three sub- strate couplers, extra-sensory feedback impulses and cross- net capturing facilities! All media access- satellite, bio-tenna, visitelly and radiogonad. Manual control panel neuro -stimulator and full- body processing capacities- all other queries will be answered on-line from within the VideoCouch self-training program. (III.I.-105)

Jeetu is mistakenly caught and taken away for surgery instead of Om. He is left at home after the surgery as his eyes are removed by the InterPlanta Services. He feels helpless and he decides to die. However, he interacts with the seductive image of Ginni. He loses his conscience in infatuation for her glamorous video image. He makes up his mind to go for other surgeries for her. He is ready to sacrifice himself for her sake. Unfortunately, he dies in the next phase of transplantation. The overpowering influence of these electronic gadgets affect on the family members of Om.

However, Jaya, wife of Om remains unaffected by the vicious influence of the machines. She constantly maintains her identity. She strongly opposes her members of family from the influence of the machine. In the beginning of the play, she wants

that Om should not accept the job. She often finds her mother-in-law engrossed in television. She quarrels over her rudeness towards Jeetu; she finds that Ma is more interested in watching the TV than her son's safety. When she is left alone in home, Virgil attempts to seduce her through the contact module. He wants a child from her. However, Jaya does not become victim of his baits. She realizes that, the person whom they were talking so long- Ginni was nothing but a computer-animated wet dream. She realizes that the western buyers with the advanced technology have cheated them. Virgil reveals objective of buying the body of Jeetu to retain youth forever. When the guards threaten to accept Virgil's proposal of virtual contract, she threatens to end her life.

Thus, in this battle between the machine and human, Jaya wins the battle and decides to live an independent life.

8.2.4 Themes

8.2.4.1 Reflection of cyber culture

Padmanabhan's play, *Harvest*, written in 1997, has a futuristic setting in a Bombay of the year 2010. Cyber culture provides clues to the spread of globalization and technology that the First World uses as tools of exploitation to dominate in transactions with the Third World. In the postmodern world, the cyber culture is spread throughout the cybernetic circuit. In the play, the Contact Module is one of them that perform an instrumental role in avoiding the actual physical existence of Ginni, simultaneously enabling her to monitor the daily activities of Om and his family members. It allows her to maintain her safe distance from the unsanitary conditions of the site of colonization (or production) i.e. the home of the Prakash family.

The Encyclopaedia of New Media defines *cyber cultures* as 'cultures formed in or associated with online social spaces'. Pramod K. Nayar, in his book titled *An Introduction to New Media and Cyber cultures*, defines cyber cultures as a system that 'includes the networked, electronic and wired cultures of the last three decades of the twentieth century'. He argues that, in the digital world, the questions relating to race, gender, and identity cannot be dismissed as being lost in the virtual world.

Cyber cultures, according to Nayar, 'are driven by material considerations of profit and power, and affect people in their real lives.' Capital is one such

consideration that creates and controls cyber culture. It determines the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in the global market and is a mechanism for control. The invention of modern gadgets like the computer, mobile, internet and wireless communication has further broadened the horizon of globalization.

In '*Harvest*', the InterPlanta Services hires the candidate suitable for their needs. Om Prakash is one of the thousand jobless people one who is ready to follow their terms and conditions. The globalization has brought the cyber cultures that control the manpower through advance technology. Om's life is drastically changed as he works for the agency. He becomes the victim of cyber culture where he is treated as commodity and the agency and its guards control his family. The Super Deluxe video coach, the colored pellets, the powder, the television, the modern bathroom facilities and the changed life style of Om Prakash family indicate the advent of cyber culture. Machines or computers replace people. The guards of InterPlanta, the agents of the video coach company, Ginni, and Virgil are the representative of the cyber culture. They exist as machines as they are cold and neutral. The poor people like Om, Jeetu, Ma, and Jaya are exploited by the capitalist society.

8.2.4.2 First World versus Third World:

Harvest delineates the relationship between the first and the third worlds, focusing on the fundamental practice of globalisation and its impacts. The first world exploits the third world for its rich resources in every sector. It survives and expands on the basis of new advanced technology and capitalism. In the play, Virgil, the foreigner buys Om Prakash's organs. Virgil represents the first and Om is the mouthpiece of the third world nations. The play shows an unemployed man [Om] selling the rights of his body parts to a buyer [Virgil] in the United States. With the technological progress, the first world is able to sell and buy the human organs. The first world countries are dependent on the third world for the economical profit. Third world is a rich storehouse of different resources essential for the growth and development of the first world. The economy of the world has changed with the industrialization, and globalization. The first world countries have developed their own economy of labour force management. With the technological advances, labour is carried out by non-human means and human labour is obtained elsewhere. The first world counties always search for the cheaper, weaker, submissive, and poverty stricken population as it is easily available.

Harvest portrays Om, the representative of the third world, who succumbs to the poverty and being helpless, he has to choose the job offered him by the third world agency

At first, he exclaims with excitement:

“We'll have more money than you and I have names for!. *Who'd believe there's so much money in the world?*” (I. i.-14).

He further clears:

“You think I did it lightly. But [...] we'll be rich! Very rich! Insanely rich! But you 'd rather live in this one small room, I suppose! Think it's such a fine thing - living day in, day out, like monkeys in a hot-case - lulled to sleep by our neighbours' rhythmic farting! Dancing to the tune of the melodious traffic! And starving”. (I. ii.-27).

Jaya blames him of making the wrong decision, but he is adamant that his decision was not made of his own free will. The play highlights the first world and its economic structure of brutal capitalism and marketing. The selling of organs becomes only option for survival for the third-world poor people. Om's mother, Ma, has completely surrendered herself to the joys and comforts brought to her home. She is thrilled by the idea of being rich without doing any manual labour.

The entire family of Om Prakash is under imperialistic pressure of science and technology as the final decision and the empowerment lies with the contact module, which reminds the shape of the globe. Through the commercialization, the first world exploits the third world. It is reflected in an interaction with Ginni as she warns to Om's family:

“The Most Important Thing is to keep Awwm smiling. Coz if Awwm's smiling. It means his body is smiling and if his body is smiling it means his organs are smiling. And that's the kind of organs that'll survive a transplant best, smiling organs....”(II.i.-54).

Thus, she can use the body organs of Om to prolong her own life. And yet, while all the donors fall prey to the plans of Ginni [Virgil]. Manjula Padmanabhan uses Jaya, the only character in the play, who reclaims human dignity that allows her to resist the lure of money.

8.2.4.3 Theme of alienation and marginalization

The play *Harvest* presents the scenario of the 21st century where the average people like Om and his family lack will of their own. They face dangerous issues in their prison-like existence such as inhospitality, unemployment, the closure of manual jobs in the factories, the moral decline and a weakened morale, the lack of privacy, increased pressure on the bread-winners, the pathetic and deplorable condition of women, organ donation, human body donation, cloning, artificial insemination and the rapid spread of cyber culture. It is the height of the modernization, globalization, and the commercial imperialism.

From the very outset of the play projects a realistic picture of modern times. Om, the unemployed frustrated young man of metropolis, is the representative of the modern man. He desperately needs a job to support his family. However, he is disappointed as he is unable to get a job. His unemployment forces him to sign an inhuman contract of organ donating and he gets isolated from society. The InterPlanta Services provides him all the facilities for his survival in exchange of his privacy and social life. He exists as a slave of the agency and continues to live in isolation from others in the tenement. This sense of alienation and marginalization makes him coward and submissive.

Om's brother, Jeetu is a male prostitute. He is one more alienated character in the play. He is also the victim of unemployment, poverty, social norms, and the industrialization. He does not become a male prostitute by choice; but the social circumstances make him so. Lack of guidance, love and care makes Jeetu isolated. Throughout the play, he is shown detached from the family members.

Om's mother, Ma also isolates herself from her own family, as she loves watching television. She never cares about her son Jeetu when the guards from the InterPlanata take him forcibly for the organ transplant. She hardly cares for others health and safety in the family. She is trapped in the modern gadgets of luxury. She isolates herself as she prefers to enclose herself in the video couch.

Om's wife Jaya is also the victim of isolation and marginalization. She seeks love from her brother-in-law, Jeetu. She lacks love from Om and Ma. She prefers to be wife of Jeetu who is more candid and free than Om.

8.2.4.4 Theme of colonialism

The play *Harvest* presents the characters that are ready to accept authority for the money. All the characters in the play have no objection or revolt against anything except Jaya. Om knows that his wife has illicit relationship with his brother but he remains docile. He behaves like a slave of the InterPlanta Services, the colonizer. His younger brother, Jeetu, enjoys the enormous amount of freedom he gets in the new Millennium. He thinks that he enjoys life; but in reality, he has very few years of life. Even his mother does not pay attention to him, because her eyes are stuck to the TV screen, as she has huge options. She is exposed to not just a couple of Doordarshan channels, but 750 video channels from all over the world.

At first, Jeetu is not ready to accept the dominance of the First World people, later he is ready to offer any organ of his body to a beautiful phantom seen in a contact module. He does not know whether that person is young or old, whether it is male or female. Jaya attempts to divert him from this trap. However, he passively follows the Guards for transplantation. Like him, even Om compromises with his safety of life. The play focuses on the craze of characters such as Om, Ma, and Jeetu for sophisticated lifestyle and electronic gadgets. They are ready to sacrifice their self-respect and dignity for the sake of the luxury and comfort. The family of Om starts receiving what they have longed for. Through the contact module fitted in their house, they can now have direct contact with the recipient thousands of miles away. It is quite natural that Om and his family members want to change their pathetic condition.

When Om signed the contract, Ginni provided everything for the family like jewellery, perfume, flowers and even chocolates to Om's family. Om's single room apartment is transformed into a cozy and luxurious flat with steel and glass, mini gym, TV set, computer terminal, an air conditioner, also a low Japanese style dining table. Ginni, the foreign Receiver from America communicates with them in the virtual meeting through the contact module.

In the beginning, the Donor and his family are enamored by the face of a young lovely girl Ginni. Even the mother of Om, Ma falls in her love and describes her as 'an angel'. Ma is surprised by the sudden infatuation of Ginni for her son. Only a little later she understands that Ginni has only interest in her beloved son's organs.

Padmanabhan shows the irony of situation that the Indian are not able to mentally decolonize themselves even after some fifty years of the colonizers' exit from India.

Om's unconditional surrender to the white rich American [Ginni/Virgil] shows the unmistakable slavish attitude of the Indians. Ginni knows the weakness of the donors. She is clever enough to entrap the Indians by inducing them with luxurious things. By offering electronic comforts, she tries to keep everyone happy in Om's house. Though Ginni takes care of Om as well as his family members, we know that she is not at all sincere. The sympathy she expresses for Om's family members is just skin-deep. Ginni increases their disillusionment and they themselves are responsible for their pathetic condition.

8.2.5 Techniques in Manjula Padmanabhan's Plays:

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* presents a dystopian vision, wherein the technical advancement has created a polarized world, divided unequally between the First World Receivers and Third World Donors. This economic gulf between the two has increased intimate interdependence. The first world requires the raw resources from the third world. Consequently, the third world men and women are equally subject to the first world control and exploitation.

The play opens with Author' Note as a science-fiction narrative:

“The year is 2010. There is significant technical advances, but the cloths and habits of ordinary people in the ‘donor’ world are no different to those of third world citizens today. Except for the obviously exotic gadgets described in action, household objects look reasonably familiar”.

The playwright has linked together the temporal future with significant technical advances. She tries to explain the role of science in the third world. Om, a Third World inhabitant, is ‘employed’ by a multinational firm called InterPlanta services as an organ donor for a first world inhabitant. The receiver or the contact module keeps Om's entire family, his Ma, Jaya, his wife and Jeetu, his brother, under strict electronic surveillance. InterPlanta services functions as an intermediary between the two worlds. The first world needs the raw resources even in the form of human organs for the experimental purposes in their multinational industries and laboratories. The first world invests in the third world in the form of electronic gadgets and franchises to exploit it in maximum manner.

This is represented in the play by the household products supplied by the InterPlanta Services to Om's family. The installation of these new products requires a complete removal of all third world equipment's from Om's flat. Modern technology destroys all existing modes of knowledge used in the third world. The third world can exploit only limited sectors of science as it is provided by the first world. However, the first world can utilize science in limitless possibilities. Thus, the third world has a disjointed experience, where technology is linked neither to the increased scientific knowledge nor to the development.

The first world Receiver in the play is an old man, Virgil, who requires both a young male body and a fertile young woman who can carry his child. However, he appears to Om and his family first as Ginni, a beautiful white-skinned woman and later in the body of Jeetu, a young attractive man ready to fulfill Jaya's sexual and material desires. The science engenders the third world through its gaze. In the play, this gaze appears in the form of the contact module that not only allows the first world Receiver to monitor and interfere in every aspect of the Donor's lives to give instructions and commands. It also allows the Donor's to see and interact with the receiver. The gaze [contact module] controls the native to exploit and fulfill the wishes of the rich.

On the one hand the contact module virtually hands over the charge of Om's flat along with his entire family into the hands of the first world receiver, Virgil/Ginni who can observe every activity. Thus, the advent of science wipes out the private life of Om making him a global citizen to be exploited by the first world citizens. Ginni, "the computer generated wet dream", fascinates both Om and Jeetu. The contact module is mediator between first world and third world. The first world people always try to win over third world by using such devices. However, there are some characters that are conquered by them, Jaya resists to surrender. She refuses to be a slave of the Receivers. She has self-pride and she tries to maintain that if it is a battle between the first world and third world.

8.2.6 Check your progress:

Choose the correct option given below:

1. The play 'Harvest' is an example of ----- fiction.
(A) detective (B) utopian (C) dystopian (D) romantic

2. The setting of the play is in the year -----.
 (A) 2020 (B) 2010 (C) 2017 (D) 2021
3. Om works as ----- for the InterPlanta Services.
 (A) a clerk (B) a guard (C) organ donor (D) agent
4. According to Virgil, the body of ----is incapable to serve his purpose.
 (A) Jaya (B) Om (C) Ma (D) Jeetu
5. The title of the play symbolizes the prospering business of -----.
 (A) telecommunication (B) robotic technology
 (C) organ transplant (D) biotechnology
6. *The Encyclopedia of New Media* defines *cyber cultures* as ‘cultures formed in or associated with online -----spaces.
 (A) communal (B) religious (C) political (D) social
7. The ----- function as an intermediary between the First World and the Third World.
 (A) guards (B) contact module
 (C) TV (D) video couch
8. ----- is mostly fascinated by the electronic gadgets.
 (A) Jaya (B) Jeetu (C) Ma (D) Om
9. ----- are lured by the beautiful Ginni.
 (A) Jaya and Om (B) Jeetu and Ma (C) Ma and Jaya (D) Om and Jeetu
10. In the end of the play, -----is successful to maintain self pride.
 (A) Jaya (B) Jeetu (C) Ma (D) Om

8.2.7 Key:

- 1) dystopian
- 2) 2010
- 3) organ donor

- 4) Ma
- 5) organ transplant
- 6) social
- 7) contact module
- 8) Ma
- 9) Jeetu and Ma
- 10) Jaya

8.2.8 Exercises:

1. How does the play bring modern Indian socio- political ethos?
2. Comment on the reflection of cyber culture in 'Harvest'.
3. Describe the play as man versus machine.
4. Comment on the portrayal of the First World and the Third World.
5. Describe the play as a dystopian fiction.
6. Write a short note on the following:
 - A) Jaya
 - B) Om
 - B) Jeetu
 - D) Ma
 - E) Ginni
 - F) Virgil

8.2.9 References:

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